

# Relationships Matter: The Role and Impact of Younger International Development Volunteers

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# Abstract

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The role of international development volunteering (IDV) has evolved from the 1980's, both in practice and in theory. A body of literature analyses international volunteering through neoliberal and neo-colonial expressions, critiquing the role of volunteering in relation to Western dominance and a lack of state intervention. Very little research exists, however, around the specific relations between volunteers and their host communities, and outputs from the relationships and understandings that are forged during volunteer assignments. Younger volunteers in particular are considered to perpetuate colonial and neoliberal ideals, yet little research has explored their function in detail, nor considered the potential within the relationships they establish. By drawing specifically on New Zealand's Volunteer Service Abroad and its UniVol programme, which places university students on year-long volunteer assignments, this research will explore examples of the roles and functions that younger volunteers can fulfil.

Using largely qualitative data drawn from key informant interviews, focus groups, and observation, it is the aim of this research to understand the conditions and requirements that allow youth IDV volunteers to make effective contributions in host communities. Within this, the value of relationships will become clear. How such relationships can build social capital, open networks, establish trust and create a mutual and reciprocal volunteering experience will be considered, arguing that the formation of relationships is in essence integral to delivering valued IDV assignments. The key findings of this thesis suggest that when assignments provide appropriate support and working conditions, alongside effective recruitment and briefing processes, the potential to deliver relevant volunteering assignments for hosts increases. Hosts are more likely to benefit from volunteering assignments that aim to develop strong connections between individuals, creating a dynamic that encourages mutual interaction.

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# List of Abbreviations

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ABG: Autonomous Bougainville Government

APTC: Australia Pacific Technical College

ARB: Autonomous Region of Bougainville

AusAid: Australian Aid

AYAD: Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development

IDV: International Development Volunteering

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

CV: Curriculum Vitae

DOC: Department of Conservation

GIS: Geographic Information System

IT: Information Technology

JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency

KI: Key Informant

MFAT: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

MFE: Ministry for the Environment

NCYC: Northern Care Youth Centre

NGO: Non-Government Organisation

NZ: New Zealand

PA: Personal Assistant

PNG: Papua New Guinea

POW: Prisoner of War

PRS: Poverty Reduction Strategy

RQ: Research Question

SAP: Structural Adjustment Programme

SASNOC: Samoa Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

UniVol: University Volunteer

UNV: United Nations Volunteers

USA: United States of America

USD: United States Dollar

VSA: Volunteer Service Abroad

VSO: Volunteer Service Overseas

WWI: World War One

WWII: World War Two

# Chapter One

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## Introduction

## 1.1 Introducing the topic

The role of youth within the wider volunteering context has experienced a revival in recent years, as younger volunteers are becoming encouraged to participate within the global volunteering arena (Allum, 2012). This promotion of youth involvement harks back to the beginnings of the modern volunteering era, where younger volunteers were prominent actors within the wider volunteer movement. Following the end of the WWII, and a shift in global consciousness towards issues surrounding peace, development, and cooperation, younger volunteers were mobilised from certain developed countries to convey such ideals through international volunteer interaction (Ehrichs, 2000; Devereux, 2008). Today, however, the involvement of youth is markedly different. Some of the more prominent forms of international youth volunteering, namely, gap year travelling, forms of volunteer tourism, and development-orientated volunteer initiatives, have been challenged in regards to their core aims and objectives. Neoliberal and neo-colonial critiques of younger volunteering forms identify the commercial, volunteer-focused approaches that govern certain volunteer programmes, and how they embody core principles centred on global citizenship and volunteer-upskilling.

Within gap year and volunteer tourism literature, there is significant debate concerning the motivations of younger volunteers, and whether programmes are actually tailored more towards the development of the volunteer themselves, or toward the development of host communities. Publications that identify neoliberal and commercial agendas within these volunteering sub-branches argue that youth volunteer experiences, and the marketing of volunteer programmes, are essentially focused on providing outcomes for the individual volunteer (Simpson, 2004; 2005; Crook *et al*, 2005; Ver Beek, 2006; Palacios, 2010; Bailey and Russell, 2012; Tiessen and Kumar, 2013; Turner, 2015; Lopez Franco and Shahrokh, 2015). Rhetoric that promotes skill development, CV building, and an experience that can allow volunteers to stand out among their peers, are aspects that Butcher and Smith (2010) consider to highlight the more ‘pervasive agenda’ of youth global citizenship (Cook and Jackson, 2006; Baillie Smith *et al*, 2016). Host communities are considered to be burdened by volunteers who are self-invested, arguing that such principles extend colonial histories of subjugation and exploitation at the expense of the global South (Ehrichs, 2000; Sin, 2009).

Parallel to this is the critique surrounding volunteering at a broader level. Volunteer programmes today feature a range of different organisational actors. Some are aligned



closely to national aid and development bodies, whereas others are privately owned and are directed by profit, non-profit, or commercially driven organisations. These various volunteering systems are generally driven by global neoliberal processes, which are openly challenged. Academics discuss modern forms of ‘new managerialism’, which are utilised in volunteer organisations to neoliberally quantify volunteer output, focusing more on fiscal justification, efficiency, and political agenda, as opposed to the wider social impacts and the benefits to host communities (Georgeou and Engel, 2011; Georgeou, 2012; Lopez Franco and Shahrokh, 2015). Indeed, Baillie Smith *et al* (2016) argue that embodied bonds and exchanges in the relationship dynamic often fall ‘beyond the grasp’ of neoliberal volunteer doctrine, as organisational systems focus inwardly on actual outputs (Turner, 2015). Shorter forms of youth volunteering in particular are questioned as to whether they accentuate such neo-colonial and neoliberal agendas (Palacios, 2010; Lopez Franco and Shahrokh, 2015).

Among the predominantly negative critiques, there have alternatively been strong proponents for the inclusion of younger volunteers in global volunteering systems (Jones, 2005; 2011; Mati, 2011; Allum, 2012). While younger volunteer programmes are criticised for their predominant focus on volunteers, the skills, experiences, and opportunities that volunteers can gain from volunteering are well documented. Research based on global citizenship theories suggests that the life-skills and values gained by youth can have wide-reaching effects on Western communities when volunteers return. Youth can be encouraged to continue in development-related fields, whilst sharing their experiences and knowledge with family and others, to produce more rounded global citizens and a ‘global workforce’ (Jones, 2005; 2011; Ansell, 2008; Baillie Smith *et al*, 2016). Certain attributes that youth possess, namely their enthusiasm and flexibility, are considered important traits that enhance their volunteering impact (Jones, 2011; Wijeyesekera, 2011). Overall, however, these considerations are limited in comparison to the volume of critique that exists around younger volunteers in general.

## **1.2 Scope of the research**

The remarks above raise a number of questions surrounding the involvement of younger volunteers within wider volunteering contexts. Research that exists around youth volunteering is often critical, yet there are no evidential signs to suggest that the resurgence of youth participants in global volunteer programmes is subsiding. The volunteering industry continues to incorporate younger volunteers in a variety of roles, but, as an area of research, coverage is comparatively limited. Baillie Smith and Laurie (2011, 548) argue that it has

only been in recent years that attention toward international volunteering has grown, and that the research that does exist has been “quite disparate across disciplines and sub-disciplines”. They particularly emphasise the lack of research that considers volunteering and its relationship to development, an area of key concern within this research (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011). Although there has been an increase in research that considers the links between development and volunteering, including the exploration of international development volunteering (IDV) as a particular volunteer form (see Aked, 2015; Burns and Howard, 2015; Schech *et al*, 2015; Trau, 2015), it is by no means a field that has been thoroughly examined. The role of younger IDV volunteers, in particular, is under-researched in comparison with other youth volunteering forms such as gap years, experiential student learning, and volunteer tourism. Further consideration of the roles that younger volunteers fulfil, and how they interact within IDV settings, is therefore timely, considering the significant growth of the youth volunteer sector.

Specifically, there are a number of research gaps within the IDV context that this thesis aims to contribute toward. The attributes and qualities of younger volunteers are often only briefly associated with enthusiasm and flexibility, without any significant detail regarding how such traits can influence the volunteering experience. This is an area which this research will expand upon, exploring in detail the characteristics of volunteers and their assignment structures. Key factors that can positively or negatively influence younger volunteering assignments will be identified. In terms of a wider context, this research will provide understanding on the roles that younger volunteers are most suited to, and what individual qualities increase the opportunity to deliver successful and positive experiences for all stakeholders. In doing this, ideas of relationship building and connecting with local communities will become evident. Recent publications have stressed the value of relationships in IDV, and how they can enable appropriate development outcomes to be achieved through closer working relations (Devereux, 2008; McWha, 2011; Georgeou, 2012; Impey and Overton, 2013; Schech *et al*, 2015; Turner, 2015). The consideration of younger volunteers in this context, however, is limited. The premise of relationships and what is produced through strong connections will be considered in detail, to expand on this emerging area of research. This has the potential to add valuable insight on the roles and impacts of younger IDV volunteers.

Integral to this research is the incorporation of various stakeholders and how they perceive the volunteering experience. Schech *et al* (2015) have argued that the perceptions of

host communities and partner organisations in published literature are significantly limited in relation to the perceptions of volunteers, which reinforce neoliberal and neo-colonial sentiments around IDV. The incorporation of local stakeholders' perceptions is an integral part of this research, in order to fully understand the impact that younger volunteers have in their attempts to deliver development-aligned volunteering aims. This will increase the significance of this research, contributing to knowledge not only around host community perceptions, but also strengthening the understanding of youth IDV roles and functions.

### **1.3 Why the UniVol programme?**

It is through identifying such knowledge gaps that this research is shaped, aiming to contribute to an appreciation of the field of youth volunteering. In order to carry out such research, a specific youth-focused IDV programme needed to be analysed. Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA), is a New Zealand based volunteer agency that works within the IDV context. It is currently New Zealand's largest and most experienced sending organisation, which has recruited over 3000 volunteers to work on various assignments throughout Africa, Asia and the South Pacific (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2015b). In 2006, VSA established its UniVol programme, which sends younger university students who have studied development-related courses on year-long IDV assignments. This programme provides an opportunity for younger university students between the ages of 18 and 28 to become involved in VSA's volunteer outreach. The UniVol programme fits within the younger volunteering context, as the majority of volunteers that are recruited meet the youth age cohort as defined by the United Nations (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017). It is also a programme that has received positive acclaim within the wider New Zealand volunteering community. From 2007 to 2017, the programme has sent 92 UniVols to nine different developing countries, to work in a wide range of assignments. It is, therefore, a volunteering programme that fits within the research parameters related to younger IDV delivery.

The opportunity to explore the UniVol programme in further detail was appreciatively given by VSA, becoming the central case study of this research. The researcher was aware of the structure of the programme and the type of volunteering that it delivered, having volunteered with VSA in 2010. This assisted in making the programme accessible, as VSA was familiar with the researcher. Independent and objective field-based research was carried out, both in New Zealand and in various host countries, in order to collect the necessary data required to address the proposed research questions. As a result, a

further opportunity was created for this thesis to break new ground. While the UniVol programme has received positive praise among those who are familiar with it, there have been no independent research projects that have examined the programme in detail. There also exists no objective studies that specifically consider younger New Zealand volunteers and their roles in overseas developing communities. This research, therefore, examines youth volunteering from a New Zealand context, comparing and contrasting the experiences of VSA, their host partners, and their UniVols, with the critiques and praises made in published literature concerning youth IDV's. A further knowledge gap is subsequently considered, exploring the approaches that larger New Zealand volunteer organisations adopt towards youth IDV, and how younger New Zealand volunteers deliver volunteer assignments within the wider volunteering context.

## **1.4 Thesis structure**

Following this introduction, Chapter Two is the first of two chapters that explore the wider literature related to the research topic. Chapter Two aims to set out the foundations of this research, by first defining the concept of volunteering. This discussion identifies the various forms of volunteering that exist, and how these different volunteering sub-branches are often considered together without clearly defined distinctions. The chapter then moves forward to identify the similarities and differences within the three main forms of international volunteering that incorporate youth, these being international development volunteering (IDV), volunteer tourism, and gap year volunteering. This discussion sheds light on the various theoretical approaches that have been used to consider volunteering forms, identifying both praise and critique towards youth involvement. A more detailed discussion around the frameworks used to critique IDV concludes this chapter, providing the platform for Chapter Three to move forward and consider literature that reviews youth volunteering roles in more detail.

Chapter Three explores literature around younger IDV's, ultimately identifying a number of research gaps that help shape the proposed research questions that are presented at the end of the chapter. How the roles of younger volunteers have evolved over time is initially discussed in this chapter, before shifting towards a detailed analysis on how younger volunteers are considered in published literature. Again, the key theoretical approaches that are used to identify the benefits and costs of youth IDV's in the field are examined. The discussion identifies an overall lack of detailed research around youth roles and functions. The limited research thus far, in relation to the perspectives of host communities, and how

they perceive their interactions with youth volunteers in particular, is then discussed. This section identifies the small number of scholars who have begun to explore the impacts of IDV on host communities, and their call for further research in this area. It points out, however, that host perceptions of younger volunteers and their impacts is an area of research which, to date, has been rarely explored. This chapter then moves forward to consider the role of relationships in volunteering, and how research connecting ideas of social capital and wellbeing to volunteering is becoming a popular area of enquiry. The lack of research around youth volunteers becomes apparent once again, adding to the scope of questioning that this research adopts. As a result of the discussion in Chapters Two and Three, four research questions have been developed, to identify the area of enquiry for this research. These questions are presented in Table 1.1, below;

**Table 1.1: Research questions**

<b>Research Question One (RQ #1)</b>	What impacts of UniVol assignments, as perceived by volunteers and VSA staff, can challenge the roles that younger volunteers can hold in IDV?
<b>Research Question Two (RQ #2)</b>	How does motivation among younger volunteers shape assignment outcome, experience, and future career pathways?
<b>Research Question Three (RQ #3)</b>	What are the views of local communities/organisations in regards to their hosting of younger volunteers?
<b>Research Question Four (RQ #4)</b>	How does the ability to foster local-level relationships between younger volunteers and host communities/partner organisations contribute to the volunteering experience?

**(Source: Author's research)**

Following on from the extensive literature review conducted in Chapters Two and Three, Chapter Four then examines the context of this research. The history and function of VSA as a volunteer sending organisation is discussed in detail, as well more specifically the UniVol programme. This discussion provides details of the systems that are put in place to manage and support UniVols in the field, as well as statistics relating to the location of volunteer assignments and the types of volunteer roles occupied by UniVols. Further contextual information considers the countries in which VSA's UniVols have volunteered.

Specific detail is provided on the four countries where field-based research was conducted, highlighting the social, political and environmental issues that are faced in each specific location. Other nations that have hosted UniVols are also contextualised, albeit in less detail, to provide an understanding of why volunteers are operating in these countries.

Chapter Five moves on from the contextualisation of the research to identify the methodological approaches that were adopted during the research process. The chapter begins by detailing the research strategy that was adopted to gain the raw data needed to address the research questions. This includes a detailed examination of the participants who were incorporated within the research. Attention then shifts to the mixed methods that were used to obtain data from those participants who were involved in the research process. Interviews and focus groups were used in order to ensure that a good breadth of data was obtained from participants to address the research questions. How these participants were then chosen to be a part of the research process is subsequently considered, detailing the various sampling methods that were adopted to obtain a wide and representative sample population. How the raw data was analysed is then considered. Having discussed the methods used to obtain data, Chapter Five then focuses upon the impact of the researcher. Detailed analysis around the positionality and reflexivity of the researcher is considered, to highlight how the researcher can affect the data set that is collected. This section also considers the implications of researchers working in developing countries, and the power relations that can extend from this. The ethical issues that are present when conducting such research, and the methods adopted to ensure an ethical approach when researching, are also considered. Overall, this chapter provides a detailed analysis of the methodological framework and how the research was undertaken.

It is at this stage of the thesis, where emphasis shifts towards the presentation of the analysed data and the patterns that have emerged from it. Chapter Six is the first of four chapters which utilise the data collected from participants to address the proposed research questions. Chapter Six focuses on RQ #1, identifying the impacts of UniVol assignments, as detailed by the responses from both UniVols and VSA staff. Discussion centres on the attributes and abilities that UniVols have, which have either assisted or limited their volunteering efforts. The examples presented through UniVol experiences, alongside opinions of VSA staff, exemplify areas where younger volunteers can contribute in the IDV context. Other examples also show positions that are perhaps more suited to other volunteer profiles. These ideas are compared and contrasted with the perspectives that were raised

within the literature review chapters. There are also examples that are unique within the UniVol programme, which can be considered and adopted in other youth IDV programmes.

Chapter Seven addresses RQ #2, examining issues related to volunteer motivation. This chapter does not focus specifically on individual UniVol motivations, owing to the volume of literature around individual volunteer motivation noted in Chapters Two and Three. Instead, Chapter Seven considers motivational factors to understand how volunteering assignments and future career decisions are influenced, and whether there exists both individual and altruistic motives among younger volunteers. This chapter begins by discussing the motivations of UniVols. Whether such initial motivations remain constant, or change as the actual volunteering experience progresses, is subsequently explored as motivational aspects are discussed. Following this discussion, the chapter then explores the role that VSA, as a sending organisation, plays in managing motivation. What measures VSA takes to ensure that outcome is evident for hosts, when volunteers are self-minded, and what steps they take to ensure the UniVol programme is not solely focused on the volunteer, are discussed. The future career paths of UniVols are then detailed, linking volunteering experiences and the aspirations to volunteer with the future interests of UniVols. Whether such decisions are an output of assignment experience are again considered. Overall, this chapter considers how youth IDV programmes can be managed in a way that allows for a 'win-win' scenario. Emphasising the importance of host community outcomes over individual volunteer aims can balance motivational factors and ensure the host is given priority over individual volunteer aims, hopefully producing benefits for both parties.

The important issue of the actions of host communities in the volunteer partnership is extended in significant detail in Chapter Eight. This chapter builds on RQ #3, which aims to understand the host perception of hosting younger volunteers, and what hosts might gain from the experience. This question extends from the call for more research that is focused on the hosts themselves, moving away from the continual framing of volunteering from the volunteer's point-of-view. The major positive and negative experiences of hosting UniVols, as perceived by partner organisations and other host individuals, are discussed in detail. These experiences are compared and contrasted with the opinions raised in Chapter Six, which details the points made by UniVols themselves. The issue of sustainability is also raised, exploring the factors that hosts believe allow volunteer assignments to be sustainable in future and deliver long-lasting impacts. This creates another level of depth to the data, as it incorporates the opinions of all stakeholders and reveals the core facets, whether positive

or negative in nature, that determine the success of UniVol assignments. Understanding the host perspective is yet another valuable means to explore what characteristics, abilities and roles allow younger volunteers to be most effective when they engage with host communities.

Finally, Chapter Nine addresses RQ #4, which examines the value of relationship building in the volunteering dynamic. Previous chapters begin to identify the value of relationships, and how they play an important part in determining assignment outcome. This chapter particularly explores the interpersonal relationships fostered between UniVols and their hosts, to emphasise how strong relationships have remained an integral element in the overall success of particular assignments. Specifically, this chapter explores how relationships can foster social capital, and how bridging and bonding forms of social capital that are fostered through strong relationships have led to more effective capacity building and skills exchanges. Forming stronger bonds between one another, building trust and fostering reciprocal interactions, are argued to strengthen the overall outcomes for both parties. This is something that it is suggested that younger volunteers are particularly effective at, owing to a number of points that are presented within this chapter. Chapter Nine identifies how interpersonal local relations between volunteers and hosts can be a particularly effective means to ensure that host communities are not disadvantaged by hosting younger volunteers, emphasising the need to consider these interpersonal dynamics more seriously within the current neoliberal structures that contextualise volunteer programmes today.

## **1.5 Overall thesis aim**

Through a close examination of VSA's UniVol programme, a programme that has yet to be critically evaluated since its establishment in 2006, this research will seek to contribute to the field of IDV research. Gaining a detailed understanding of the relationships that are established in the field and the overall implications of the UniVol programme upon host community members will be integral to this enquiry. Georgeou (2012: 1) argues that "there has been little empirical research on the experiences of development volunteers, the organisations that send them and even less on the experiences of those who host them". There is even less attention in research to the role of younger volunteers in IDV, exploring the perspectives that host communities hold toward youth and how they consider their experiences working together. The ways that younger volunteers can contribute, and the appropriate conditions and support networks which can enhance this, are too often assumed



without detailed analysis. This is where this thesis aims to make a substantial contribution, formulating research questions that consider host experiences alongside volunteer perceptions, in order to ascertain the impact of UniVol assignments, how they impact on future outcomes for stakeholders, and the key variables that lead to either success or failure in the volunteering dynamic. It is timely to conduct such research that considers the wider functions and experiences related to younger volunteers in IDV, in light of its growing significance within the global volunteer network. The UniVol programme provides a valuable case study from which to explore more widely the roles of younger IDV volunteers, and understand their place and function within the broader development volunteering context.

# Chapter Two

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**An overview of volunteering**

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter, the first of two literature review chapters, explores research on volunteering, identifying the key sub-branches most relevant to this research. The notion of volunteering has been synonymous with change, re-envisioned over time as various conceptualisations of what volunteering encompasses and how it is utilised in different spaces are adapted. In its simplest form, volunteering has been defined as “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organisation” (Wilson, 2000: 215). This suggests that the main underpinnings of volunteering should focus more on the individual or the community that the volunteer contributes towards, rather than the volunteer themselves. Such thought is problematic, however, in relation to volunteering today. Altruism, compassion, and a desire to help have in some respect been engulfed by capitalist, professionalist and neoliberalist attitudes toward current volunteer approaches. Anheier and Salamon (1999) argue that volunteering is linked increasingly less to its traditional forms in religious and civil service circles, and is now tied to individual demands and choices, where governments and non-profit organisations are openly encouraging volunteer involvement. This is why volunteering in the modern age is now considered a “complex phenomenon that is not clearly delineated”, varying through different organisations, sectors, and public perceptions (Hustinx *et al*, 2010: 73).

Understanding the various theoretical and conceptual influences that have fashioned international development volunteering (IDV), and how it relates specifically to younger volunteers and the volunteering administered by VSA’s UniVol programme (discussed in detail in Chapter Four), will provide the literary platform upon which this research will be built. Initially, this chapter will explore volunteering in general, discussing the complexity of volunteering before establishing an appropriate definition for this research. Following this, the distinctions between various types of volunteering will be addressed. How alternative strands of volunteering have emerged, and why they are distinctly different to IDV in terms of their approaches, their outputs, and which societal groups they involve, will be considered. It will become clear that although certain types of volunteering can be differentiated, they also share strong commonalities that overlap. Discussion will then shift specifically toward IDV, exploring its historical context in order to understand how various theoretical and historical movements have shaped its practice and implementation by both state and private sectors. Overall, this chapter will attempt to clearly identify IDV and how it is considered in relevant literature, allowing the following chapter to look specifically at

youth participation and how younger volunteers can deliver both positive and negative impacts during their time on assignment.

## **2.2 Demystifying volunteering**

The complexity of defining the term ‘volunteering’, has been acknowledged in published literature, owing to the numerous components that it now encompasses (Milligan and Conradson, 2006; Hustinx *et al*, 2010). Volunteering in a broader sense has generally been associated with the notion of giving one’s time or services to “help improve the society in which they live, or to participate in benevolent type activities” (Pegg *et al*, 2012: 81). While such definitions help achieve a basic understanding around how volunteers act within the spaces where they operate, the notion that the volunteer is ‘giving’, and is acting in a ‘benevolent’ fashion, are highly contested issues within academic circles. There are numerous occasions in volunteering literature where volunteering is assumed at its broadest level as being an act of “personal giving” (Chalmers, 2001: 1), most commonly in the form of unpaid work with no monetary compensation or a formal wage (Crook *et al*, 2006; Borgonovi, 2008). Making such associations toward volunteering today can be problematic. Because volunteering has become so varied, initiated under numerous guises through different spaces and at different scales, the understanding of ‘giving’ and its connotations with charity may not be accurate in certain volunteering examples. Milligan and Conradson (2006; Milligan, 2007) identify that the voluntary sector comprises formal organisations that are non-profit distributing, constitutionally independent of the state and self-governing (see Parboteeah *et al*, 2004). Individuals, however, can undertake informal volunteering outside of the boundaries of such formal organisations. Adding to this, they note that “further confusion can arise when an individual volunteers informally, outside the structure of a formal voluntary organisation, but within the formal structure of a statutory or private sector organisation” (Milligan and Conradson, 2006: 3). These definitions of volunteering do not preclude volunteers from benefiting from their own work (Wilson, 2000). Outside of, and even within formal voluntary settings, there is evidence that volunteering can involve some remuneration or allowance. The understanding of volunteering, as Hustinx *et al* (2010) argue, can therefore be associated with public perception, making a precise definition of volunteering elusive when it can be questioned in the public mind. It is imperative, then, to be mindful of the diversity of volunteering when using terms associated with giving and charity.

Notions surrounding altruistic intent, kindness, and benevolence are also highly contested when interwoven with volunteering definitions. Wilson (2000: 216) states that “some think the desire to help others is constitutive of volunteering...[whereas] others subscribe to the view that volunteering means acting to produce a ‘public’ good”. Whilst it is understood that certain individuals will volunteer “...to benefit someone in need, or society in general” (Tomazos and Butler, 2012: 180), or “...to make a difference in the world” (Keese, 2011: 257), it is important to again acknowledge the contested assumption that altruistic motives are inherent in all volunteering forms. Smith (1981; cited in Georgeou, 2012: 10) states that linking altruism within definitions of volunteering can be very misleading, as “within this framework there is little difference between the individual who performs a social service and a person performing a terrorist act for national independence... both undertakes their activities without remuneration, coercion or compulsion”. As volunteering has shifted over time, it has become evident that global processes such as neoliberalism and modernisation (discussed in detail in Chapter Two) have also brought about a more diverse set of motivations to volunteer. Personal reasons that do not explicitly invoke altruistic behaviour, such as future career developments or to foster cultural capital (Desforges, 1998), defy such notions.

It is these complexities within the rapidly expanding volunteering world that can create confusion. The term is argued by Kendall and Knapp (1995; cited in Milligan and Conradson, 2006: 3) to now resemble something of a “loose and baggy monster” when not clearly delineated. It is imperative, therefore, to define how the term ‘volunteering’ is understood throughout this research. Devereux’s (2008: 358) definition effectively encompasses the potential experiences that volunteering can deliver for volunteers and hosts:

“At its best, I argue, international volunteering brings benefits (and costs) to individual volunteers and the organisations with which they work, at the same time as providing the space for an exchange of technical skills, knowledge, and cross-cultural experience in developing communities. Most significantly, volunteering can raise awareness of, and a commitment to, combating existing unequal power relations and deep-seated causes of poverty, injustice, and unsustainable development.”

Volunteering, therefore, can be best considered as a concept where individuals undertake an act of working alongside a community, organisation, or group, to better the social and economic context in which they operate. Motivations for such volunteering can vary, including the idea of ‘giving’ time and altruistic intent, but can also include self-

motivated elements that demonstrate more of a working relationship. This perspective is similar in nature to Jones's (2008) use of the term, when he discusses the rise of 'global work' in relation to volunteering. The overall aims of volunteering should continue to focus more towards removing such injustices and inequalities within the communities or environments in which the volunteering takes place.

## **2.3 Domestic and international volunteering**

### **2.3.1 Domestic volunteering**

One major distinction that is important to acknowledge in this research, because of the clear international element to the UniVol case study, is the variance between domestic and international volunteering. Domestic volunteering throughout current literature is seen as an activity that is normally amalgamated into an individual's routine commitments, worked around such mundane daily commitments as work and family (Thomas, 2001). Domestic volunteering is generally considered as an activity that is done without any remuneration or wage, and can be more flexible in terms of when volunteers want/can commit their time and effort (see Thomas, 2001; Crook *et al*, 2006; Guzman, 2006; Borgonovi, 2008). Domestic volunteering is also argued to create what Smith *et al* (2010) term as an idea of being in a certain location, fostering a commitment towards local communities where people live, developing stronger social links and a sense of identity (Astin *et al*, 1999; Measham and Barnett, 2008; Garcia Valinas *et al*, 2012; Holdsworth and Quinn, 2012; Binder and Freytag, 2013).

Comparatively, international volunteering "generally refers to short- to long-term volunteer placements done outside the volunteer's home state with minimal compensation" (Georgeou and Engel, 2011: 297). International volunteering differs in the notion that individuals make "a total commitment to another culture for a specific term, so that their contribution is not a solitary act or a voluntary donation of time, but rather a distinct period in that individual's life" (Thomas, 2001: 22). During this period of time, international volunteers will work with individuals and members from other cultural groups, fostering international understanding on global development issues, developing cross-cultural relationships, and furthering occupational choices (Crabtree, 1998; Sherraden *et al*, 2008, cited in McBride *et al*, 2012; Allum, 2012). Certain forms of international volunteering now incorporate some form of wage or living compensation, owing to the progressively commercialised and professionalised nature of international volunteering that has evolved

since the 1980's (Jones, 2011; Georgeou, 2012). Specific international volunteering forms that are aligned with the context of this thesis include: IDV, volunteer tourism, and the gap year overseas experiences.

### **2.3.2 International development volunteering (IDV)**

The concept of IDV resonates most strongly with the type of volunteering associated with VSA, and the UniVol programme in particular. IDV is considered as a form of alternative international development, due to the fact that it is short-term in nature and is voluntary rather than formal paid employment (Tiessen, 2012). Following Devereux's (2008) previously cited definition, IDV involves volunteers working within developing communities in a space that aims to enable the transfer of knowledge and skills, whilst at the same time fostering relationships that encourage cross-cultural exchanges. Volunteering at this level is generally co-ordinated by NGO's or governmental agencies as an extension of the services they provide within developing countries (Tiessen, 2012; Lough and Allum, 2013). Although such volunteering is consistent with missionary work dating back to the colonial era (Palmer, 2002; Georgeou and Engel, 2011), the birth of modern IDV is generally recognised to have taken place following the conclusion of WWI, when labour camps were established to assist with the rebuilding process throughout Europe (Palmer, 2002; Etmanski, 2003; Devereux, 2008). Its global influence expanded further following the end of WWII, where again a number of volunteers were sent from allied nations to Europe to assist with rebuilding (Ehrichs, 2000). This coincided with a global effort to focus on the development and advancement of poorer nations. Large international bodies, such as the Bretton Woods institutions, adjusted their agendas to incorporate Third World development (Etmanski, 2003), setting the platform for NGO's and volunteer organisations to become permanent actors within the development paradigm.

Volunteering in the late 1940's and 1950's was primarily viewed as an informal means to build friendships (Georgeou, 2012), as it was considered that "wars and global poverty could be avoided if people just knew each other better through shared experience of day-to-day activities" (Epprecht, 2004: 690). IDV became more formally recognised in 1951, when the Graduate Volunteer Scheme became "probably the first formal opportunity in the world for long-term international volunteering for development" (Devereux, 2008: 359). This programme was based on an inter-government agreement between Australia and Indonesia, established at the University of Melbourne. Many other prominent global volunteering agencies were formed during the 1950's and 1960's, most notably Voluntary

Service Overseas (VSO) (UK) in 1958, the Peace Corps (USA) in 1961, and VSA (NZ) itself in 1962 (Peat, 1987; Carew, 2002), as IDV continued to gain global popularity (Etmanski, 2003; Tiessen, 2012). Organisations like the Peace Corps were considered to act as a ‘spur’ for western governments to form volunteer organisations, thus expanding the industry (Butcher and Smith, 2015). Throughout the 1960’s and 1970’s, IDV was linked with geopolitical and modernist economic concerns. This significantly changed the 1980’s, however, as global social movements, alternative development ideals, and neoliberalism saw a rise in civil society and a greater emphasis placed on community development (Georgeou, 2012). Ideas around social justice and sustainability became popular rhetoric, addressing unequal relations that extended from economic modernisation (Ehrichs, 2000; Epprecht, 2004). International volunteering was professionalised during this era, as willing volunteers were ‘supplanted’ by trained professionals who were deployed to address specific ‘skills gaps’ in developing communities, emphasising new ideals around poverty reduction and empowerment (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011). The concept of ‘development’ during the 1980’s and 1990’s, however, was criticised. Growing public opinion identified the exclusion of local people within the professionalised development industry (Escobar, 1995, cited in Georgeou, 2012). Such pressures created an ideological shift within IDV again, to promote ideas of ‘mutual’ and ‘reciprocal’ learning, ‘capacity building’, and ‘partnership’ (Devereux, 2008; Unstead-Joss, 2008; Lorimer, 2010; Diprose, 2012; Fee and Gray, 2013). This rhetoric aimed to empower locals and emphasise the value of meaningful volunteer engagement, appreciating partnerships and mutuality, whilst minimising the aura of western dominance (Lopez Franco and Shahrokh, 2015).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, IDV volunteers today are argued to contribute to host communities by transferring skills and aid at the local-level, utilising ideals such as capacity building, mutual learning, and cross-cultural understanding as a means to do so (Sherraden *et al*, 2006; Lough and Allum, 2013). Their ability to work closely with local counterparts is considered to be a distinct benefit that they hold over government workers and other development professionals, being able to connect to the community more effectively, yet carrying fewer pressures in regards to their political affiliations and deadline delivery (Picken and Lewis, 2015). By working alongside partner organisations and communities, volunteers aim to enable locals to meet their development objectives, fostering positive and mutual change between the two actors (Lewis, 2006; Lopez Franco and Shahrokh, 2015). This relational way is considered to enable IDV volunteers to interact more closely with societal groups who are often poorer and more marginalised than others, ‘humanising’ the



development process (Lewis, 2006; Howard and Burns, 2015). Whilst IDV volunteers share similar traits to other volunteering sub-branches, they can deliver markedly different outcomes through their preparedness, support networks, development-related skills, and time spent in the field.

### **2.3.3 Volunteer tourism**

Volunteer tourism is another significant type of volunteering in relation to this research, as it is often discussed interchangeably with IDV in the youth context. As a concept, it was established through the alternative tourism discourse in the 1980's (Keese, 2011), at a time when mainstream modernist capitalism was challenged both academically and by the general public. Such forms of tourism were conceived in an "attempt to balance tourism as a profit-driven, resource-hungry activity with the development needs of destination environments and communities" (Telfer and Sharpley, 2008: 27). Ideas around conservation, 'bottom-up' grassroots styles of development, and local participation and empowerment came into tourism practice to "...mitigate such unequal relationships and ineffective [host community] growth" (McLachlan and Binns, 2014: 100). Volunteer tourism itself can be defined as an experience where "a tour operator offers travellers an opportunity to participate in an optional excursion that has a volunteer component..." (Brown, 2005: 480), promoting the idea of reciprocity between the traveller and the host community (Raymond and Hall, 2008). This volunteer component can be associated with environmental, cultural or humanitarian aspects (Chen and Chen, 2011), but will normally aim to engage with community or conservation-based development work in an effort to bring about positive change to the host community (Sin, 2009; Keese, 2011). At its core, volunteer tourism is consumption-orientated, giving prospective travellers the opportunity to engage in social action whilst meeting their personal travel desires (Wearing *et al*, 2008; Wearing, 2010; Butcher and Smith, 2015).

Where volunteer tourism, or 'voluntourism', differs from IDV is in the length of time that individuals spend in the field within host communities. Typically, volunteer tourists can spend anywhere between two weeks to three months actually volunteering, depending on what percentage of their holidays are focused toward volunteering. Another significant difference is in costs, where international development volunteers are generally supported by some sort of wage or remuneration, as opposed to volunteer tourists, who pay to travel and volunteer themselves. Paying for such an experience is argued to potentially foster unequal power relations, placing the volunteer in a dominant position (McGehee, 2012). However,

there are different scales of volunteer tourism. Certain tourists are genuinely committed to volunteering as their main reason for travelling, whereas others want to experience brief contact with local communities as part of their holiday experience. It is within such differences that debate and critique towards volunteer tourism has evolved, questioning the significance of volunteer tourism in relation to development-orientated volunteering.

Since its initial rise in the 1980's, volunteer tourism has grown substantially to become a popular travel option for a variety of travellers across the world. Conran (2011) argues that growth has been driven by the expansion of neoliberal globalisation and the emergence of consumer consciousness, most particularly among the middle and upper classes of the developed world (Bryant and Goodman, 2004; Sin, 2010). Neoliberal free markets, privatisation and commodification have intensified volunteer tourism to a point where the industry has become very profitable, evident through the numerous volunteer tourist opportunities that exist within the mainstream tourism market today (Mostafanezhad, 2013). Non-government organisations (NGOs) that emerged as actors in the international development arena in the 1980's became involved within aspects of volunteer tourism, under the more common phrase of 'voluntourism' (Keese, 2011). Operating in this capacity enabled NGOs to not only experience the economic benefits that voluntourism offered, but to increase their operating capacity and organisational appeal, allowing them to provide a wider range of volunteer opportunities. Such NGOs are seen to be "tapping into the demand for alternative travel experiences and, at the same time, exploiting a new niche within the aid industry" (Keese, 2011: 259). This has raised questions about whether the development-minded philosophies and practices behind volunteer tourism are waived in favour of the global commodification of international tourist markets (Tomazos, 2009; Wearing, 2010; Coghlan and Gooch, 2011).

From a development point of view, tourism and poverty alleviation are argued to have become increasingly linked, with tourism offering an "ideal avenue through which poorer countries can open up to the benefits of globalisation" (Scheyvens, 2007: 231). Aspects of voluntourism, when administered in the appropriate fashion, can act positively towards community empowerment and development. In this role, however, voluntourism can become highly contested, as it encompasses a combination of development work, education and tourism (Keese, 2011). Butcher and Smith (2015) have gone as far as to challenge the impact that development thinking has had in altering the perceptions of holiday experiences, by tying local volunteer tourism interventions into 'alternative' development ideas. They

argue that a rise in concern around ethical personal behaviour has led to a decline in political morality, incorrectly valuing individual ethical identity as a means to achieve actual development (Butcher and Smith, 2015). They challenge whether volunteer tourists should have to carry such ethical baggage when they travel altruistically and form personal encounters with hosts (Butcher and Smith, 2015). This is shown in voluntourism's relation to the client, where it is required to "simultaneously meet a supply-based demand for assistance, but also simultaneously satisfy a segment of tourist demand as well; delivering revenues and profits to the broker organisations and convey an ethically sound message to the morally conscious or even altruistic tourist" (Tomazos and Cooper, 2011: 406).

However, the role of volunteer tourism is often challenged in connection with development theories. Questions around the motives of volunteer tourist operators, and their commitment towards positive community development, debate whether such tourism forms are concerned more about the volunteer or the 'voluntoured' (McGehee and Andereck, 2009). Raymond (2008: 48) states that "it is increasingly being suggested that volunteer tourism does not always represent a mutually beneficial form of tourism and that while volunteer tourists may experience a range of benefits, in many cases, the organisations that host such volunteers gain far less". Volunteer tourism is considered to be ineffective in its ability to provide positive community development, due to the limited time that many volunteers are engaged with communities (see West, 2011; Bailey and Russell, 2012). Many volunteer tourists also wish to engage in traditional mass tourist activities, such as sightseeing and experiencing tourist-related activities, using volunteering as a way to incorporate interesting and entertaining elements within their holiday experience (Mustonen, 2007). Other issues are presented in regards to the roles that volunteer tourists hold. Raymond and Hall (2008: 531) argue that "when volunteer tourists inappropriately take on roles of 'expert' or 'teacher', regardless of their experience or qualifications, this can be seen to represent the neo-colonial construction of the westerner as racially and culturally superior". West (2011: 1) warns that travellers who are looking to 'make a difference' in such capacities often get placed within development work under the pretence that they can "in some way, make positive contributions to some aspect[s] of life", which may not be the case (Tomazos and Butler, 2010).

Where IDV has become more professionalised and centred on ideas of mutual exchange and working together, volunteer tourism is pitched toward any prospective traveller who is willing to pay for the experience. This can inherently prioritise the volunteer

(Hamilton-Smith, 2009). If travellers are unfamiliar with the protocols of the host communities they visit, it makes some form of pre-departure training imperative (Tomazos and Cooper, 2011; West, 2011). Tomazos and Cooper (2011) reveal in their study, however, that out of the 40 volunteer tourist organisations that they reviewed, only 16 made it clear that they provided any sort of training to prepare volunteers before they left. This can not only negatively affect the volunteer, but could be considerably more problematic if ideas around neo-colonialism, marginalisation, and ‘othering’ are reinforced in host community experiences. There have been legitimate concerns around the processes of neo-colonialism and ‘othering’ within volunteer tourism, as the limited engagement with local communities, the overall volunteer inexperience, and the associated perception of wealth among volunteer travellers, are argued to marginalise host communities (McGehee and Andereck, 2008; Sin, 2009; West, 2011; Coghlan and Gooch, 2011; Bailey and Russell, 2012; McGehee, 2012). Imagery that promotes volunteer tourism is also considered to reinforce ideas of ‘othering’, marginalising host communities and giving power to the volunteers (McGehee, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013). Sin (2009, 495) argues that volunteer tourism can therefore be stuck in a paradox, where it “...will almost always involve the ‘richer’ and ‘better off’ providing aid to the ‘poor’ and ‘worse off’”. Local communities can be seen as inferior or less able, which can limit the relationships that volunteer tourists and local community members can develop, affecting the overall aims of fostering positive community development. West (2011: 2) states that in such forms, volunteer tourism will continue to “orient... [the benefits to] voluntourists and sending organisations rather than the people they are supposed to be helping”. These practices can be considered controversial, owing to the fact that volunteer tourism is generally undertaken within the most marginalised communities in the world (Coghlan and Gooch, 2011).

Throughout academic literature, there are a number of suggestions to best manage volunteer tourism and enhance its potential for positive community development. Many of these ideas run in parallel with IDV delivery. One major factor that could potentially improve the development impact of volunteer tourism is ensuring that sending organisations carefully consider what type of voluntary work they involve their clients in (Scheyvens, 2007; Raymond, 2008; Raymond and Hall, 2008; Tomazos and Cooper, 2011). Organisations must develop strong relationships based on mutual respect and trust with host organisations (Raymond and Hall, 2008), involving locals in consultation processes to safeguard long-term viability and appropriateness (Tomazos and Cooper, 2011). Once appropriate assignments are established, organisations should then ensure that volunteers are

comprehensively prepared in order to avoid marginalising and alienating host communities, thus enabling volunteers to make a genuine contribution (Raymond and Hall, 2008). Many academics believe that volunteer tourists have honest desires to provide practical assistance, and are driven by notions of compassion and altruism to support host communities through volunteering (Mustonen, 2007; Butcher and Smith, 2010; Lo and Lee, 2011; Bailey and Russell, 2012). Certain volunteers are also considered to be great social actors in supporting local issues (Conran, 2011), and there are organisations in operation that have gone to great lengths to ensure that power relations are equalised and the volunteer tourist experience is 'resident-controlled' and 'resident-driven' (McGehee, 2012). If more volunteer tourism operations are able to focus equally on community development, alongside the commercialised business aspects that come with it (Tomazos and Cooper, 2011), then McGehee (2012: 101) believes that the "potential for actual change amongst volunteers in the everyday adoption of more socially-conscious economic and social behaviour (i.e. personal as political) could be enormous". Whether these potential improvements can relate to IDV volunteering amongst youth, or are illustrated within youth IDV already, will be a valuable factor to consider in the later stages of this research.

#### **2.3.4 Gap year volunteering**

One form of volunteering that draws aspects of both IDV and volunteer tourism is the gap year phenomenon, which has expanded significantly in recent years within the overall expansion of volunteering. Ideas of gap year travel dominate discussions associated with younger volunteers, linking it closely to the subject of this research. Gap year travel has been defined by Millington (2005, cited in Lyons *et al*, 2012: 365) as a nominal period during which a person delays further education or employment in order to travel. All-encompassing, the gap year can involve a diverse range of activities, including various forms of paid and unpaid work, leisure and travel, at various scales, both domestic and international (Simpson, 2004; Heath, 2007). Gap years generally involve students who are transitioning from the secondary school level of education or from tertiary studies, both undergraduate and postgraduate (Lyons *et al*, 2012). Examples of gap year experiences can include students who spend several months within full-time employment in order to finance an overseas trip or volunteer placement, students who spend a year in paid employment to finance attendance at university, or students who travel and/or volunteer for a year (Heath, 2007).

The creation of the gap year phenomenon can be traced within the post WWII efforts to improve cultural understanding and compassion amongst youth (Millington, 2005;

Griffin, 2013). Similar to IDV, gap year experiences were borne within volunteer organisations like the Peace Corps, who targeted youth to assist rebuilding projects in Europe at the end of the war. Such actions aimed to strengthen relations and solidarity among previously warring nations (Etmanski, 2003). When neoliberal processes and alternative forms of tourism and volunteering opened opportunities for the private sector, the gap year experience was re-imagined. Gap years became tied to notions of development, as well as the commercially-driven, commodified aspects of modern volunteer tourism (Stehlik, 2010). The ‘Third World gap year project’ was a concept evolved through the 1980’s and 1990’s (Ansell, 2008). In a similar vein to volunteer tourism, the gap year phenomenon has expanded rapidly since the 1980’s, becoming increasingly incorporated within formal educational and employment structures. It has attracted considerable interest from western governments, who are actively encouraging young people to commit to such experiences (Simpson, 2005; Ansell, 2008). The gap year is important to consider in relation to this research, as it shares many similarities with youth IDV and volunteer tourism, drawing similar praises and critiques.

The gap year can be considered as a “break from education”, to get off the ‘academic treadmill’ and to allow students to travel to different parts of the world and immerse themselves within foreign cultures (Jones, A., 2004; O’Shea, 2011: 568). Very similar to volunteer tourism, proponents of gap year travel believe that volunteers are able to travel abroad for a year and experience the world, whilst at the same time making a meaningful commitment towards local communities that they visit by becoming actors of positive development. For such reasons, formal education bodies and state governments have started to consider gap year experiences as an educational tool that has spin-offs for host communities (see Ansell, 2008; Holmes, 2009). Within academic literature, however, a majority of the positive aspects focus on the benefits to ‘gappers’ themselves. Ansell (2008) argues that such forms of tourism and volunteering are used by gap year students to carve out a personal identity, as well as a means for informal qualification to help them in the future. Gap years are considered as an opportunity to interpret the world first-hand (Griffin, 2013), at the same time gaining maturity and confidence. Participants can gain specific soft skills that are unobtainable through secondary schools or universities, and develop a personality package that is considered to set volunteers apart from other students in the eyes of graduate employers (O’Reilly, 2006, Stehlik, 2010; O’Shea, 2011; King, 2011; Nieman, 2013). This is the way that many gap year travel organisations are now marketing the gap year experience. Heath (2007: 94) reveals the five most frequently cited positives to gap year

travel that are made by provider organisations, gap year advice websites, and published guidebooks. They include;

- The gap year provides an opportunity for self-reflection, enhancing students' sense of perspective and facilitating better-informed decisions about their degree plans and future career options;
- The gap year provides an opportunity for self-development and personal enrichment;
- 'Gappers' adapt particularly well to university life as they have greater maturity than 'non-gappers', are less distracted by the freedoms of university life and are less likely to drop out, rendering them attractive to admissions tutors;
- 'Gappers' acquire 'soft skills' that are not necessarily acquired during their formal education, such as communication skills, organisational skills and team working skills; and
- For all these reasons, employers favour 'gappers'.

There are concerns that are expressed throughout academic literature, however, surrounding the appropriateness of gap years in relation to development. Like volunteer tourism, commentators have expressed issues around the importance placed upon the 'self', the gap year traveller, instead of the host communities. Individualism continues to exacerbate colonial imaginaries of power and 'othering', marginalising host communities. 'Gappers' themselves already represent power imbalances, as the cost of undertaking gap year projects ensures that the opportunity is often limited to the upper and middle classes, the 'cultural elite', who can afford the opportunity (Simpson, 2005; Stehlik, 2010; Lyons *et al*, 2012; Griffin, 2013; Nieman, 2013). This is also argued to create hierarchies and stratify societies, when former 'gappers' are favoured over other graduates (Simpson, 2005). Motives for becoming a 'gapper', like furthering individual skills and curriculum vitae 'building' (Ansell, 2008), can show the commodified nature of some gap year programmes and their lack of actual 'development' input.

Academics have also argued that organisations within the gap year industry are developing products that do little for the needs of either the volunteer tourists or the host communities that they seek to serve (Simpson, 2004; Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Lyons and Wearing, 2012; Lyons *et al*, 2012). Richardson (2002: 28) argues that for programmes to be considered developmental in nature, they "...have to break the cycle of dependency between the volunteer and the local community". Simpson (2004; 2005) has been

particularly critical of gap year organisations in relation to development. She argues that particular organisations are using development agendas in their rhetoric, but simplifying the development discourse to a point where it is perceived that development can be ‘done’ by any un-skilled person (Simpson, 2004; 2005). When inexperienced ‘gappers’ get to the field, they often realise that they are ill-prepared for the experience of volunteering, sometimes obviously establishing power relationships within host communities as they are unaware of the cultural implications of their presence (Richardson, 2002; Ansell, 2008). Such examples can negatively impact on host communities, as well as on the volunteers themselves, who can become disillusioned by the gap year experience.

### **2.3.5 Synthesising volunteer forms**

It is important to acknowledge that there are similar attributes that are identifiable across IDV, volunteer tourism, and gap year travel. Within published literature, however, the distinction between different volunteering sub-branches from a youth context is often not clear. There exists more literature on youth gap year and volunteer tourism programmes, which has the tendency to merge together the roles that younger volunteers fulfil across all three sub-branches. Assignment duration, the quality of pre-departure preparation, the emphasis on delivering development-related outcomes, and the agendas of volunteer sending organisations, however, are just some of the factors mentioned above that can lead to distinct experiences and outcomes among younger volunteering programmes. The roles that younger volunteers can fulfil in IDV can, therefore, become obscured when they are not discussed in specific detail. This chapter will now extend the focus on IDV, to consider literature that has examined and critiqued its role within development agenda.

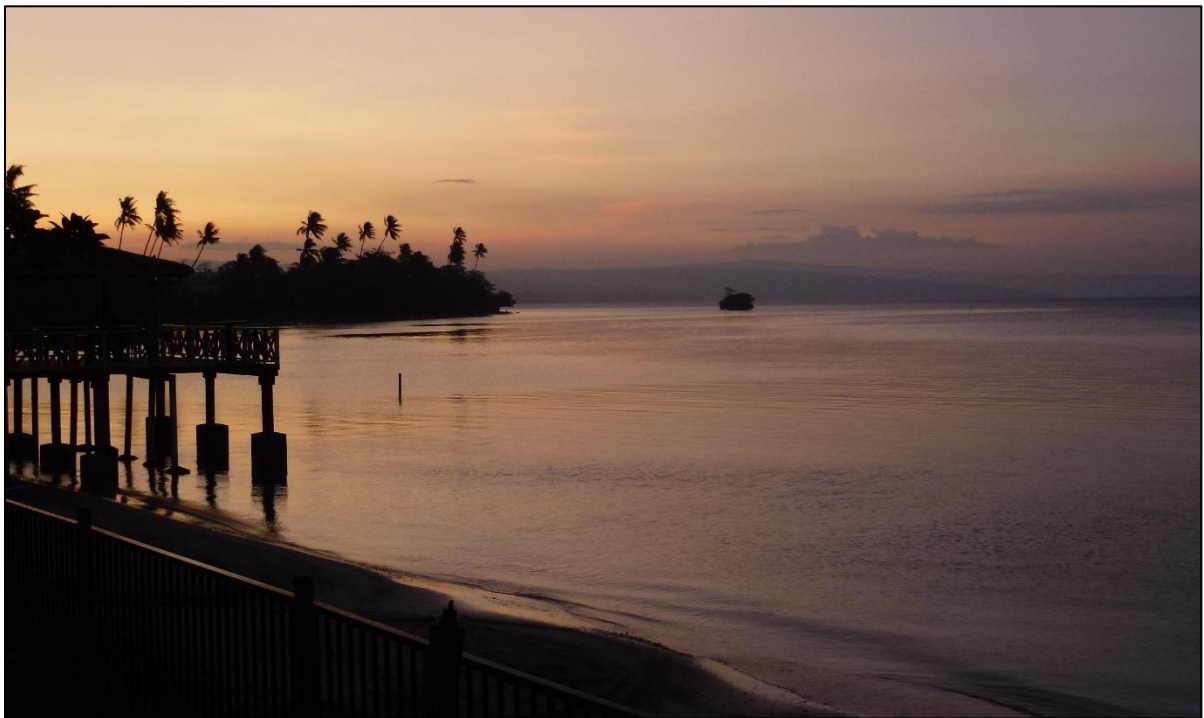
## **2.4 International development volunteering critique**

### **2.4.1 Post-colonial critique**

One of the major critiques within development volunteering, and development in general, is from a post-colonial perspective. This theory links the connections and power relations, which have been established in practices within development today, to the imperial and colonial movements of the past (McEwan, 2009). Colonialism and imperialism were predominant from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century. European powers seized political and territorial control of foreign states right across the globe as a means to increase state wealth, “spreading the light of European ‘civilisation’ to ‘benighted’ areas of the world” (McEwan, 2009: 81). Colonial expansion immersed the world into the European



capitalist system, at the same time establishing dominant power relations over colonies and colonial ‘subjects’. In certain cases, extreme forms of marginalisation, discrimination and racism were enforced upon nations to gain such control. Many key post-colonial theorists have challenged the way that modern development practices are viewed, arguing that imaginaries, knowledge and relationships are influenced significantly from the colonial period. Perhaps one of the most prominent post-colonial critiques was delivered by Edward Said (1978; 1993), who discussed the idea of ‘imaginative geographies’. He argued that the perceptions of nations and communities are invented, impacted by western discourses and colonialism that create ideas of difference between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, the ‘developed’ and the ‘developing’. Colonialism is considered to have created an “inside and an outside” for how we see the world, placing western perceptions of civil society as the measure for what is considered appropriate (Gregory, 1995: 36). Kothari and Wilkinson (2010) show that colonial imaginaries in previous island colonies, such as the deeply gendered depiction of the ‘uncivilised’ or ‘lazy’ ‘native’, and the ‘idyllic paradise’ (exemplified in Plate 2.1), not only confirmed racial superiority and marginalisation at the time, but have also made it difficult to reclaim local histories and identities that contest colonial representations in the post-colonial era. It is such historical influences that post-colonial theory draws upon to critique modern day development and development volunteering.



**Plate 2.1: The sun setting over the ‘idyllic paradise’ of Kokapo, East New Britain, PNG. (Source: Author’s research)**

A number of scholars have raised concerns surrounding the inherent colonialist nature of humanitarian aid and development volunteering (Thomas, 2001; Wall and Mathieson, 2006; Palacios, 2010; Holdsworth and Quinn, 2012; Diprose, 2012; Bailey and Russell, 2012; Perold *et al*, 2012; Thompson and Weaver, 2014). It has been argued that the power behind volunteering agencies lies directly in the global north, reinforcing colonial practices and dominance over people in developing communities (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011). The idea of sending volunteers from countries in the global north to assist in developing communities can also reinforce geographical processes of exploitation, as such methods can replicate motives used within initial colonial intervention (Tiessen, 2012). Certain sending organisations have been challenged for promoting stereotypes of ‘foreign others’, through the iconography that they use for marketing and promotion (Butcher, 2003; Raymond and Hall, 2008; Diprose, 2012). Manzo (2008, cited in Mostafanezhad, 2013: 331) argues that the iconography of children, for example, by NGO’s can “...hark back to colonial metaphors of infantilism and savagery”.

The dichotomy between ‘self’ and ‘other’ from the colonial era is, therefore, continually mobilised through perpetuations as the ‘giver’ and the ‘receiver’ in volunteering terms (Palacios, 2010). Palacios (2010) contests volunteering through a post-colonialist lens, questioning whether help from the global north is actually effective help or holds any relevance to developing communities. He argues that fostering intercultural relationships and cross-cultural learning can be positive when the language used by development volunteer agencies avoids the notion of development aid and assistance, placing volunteers in positions where they are not ‘experts’, but ready to extend intercultural understanding and share knowledge reciprocally. Post-colonial criticism can be addressed if IDV organisations promote the benefit of reciprocity and avoid marginalisation within developing communities through the language, marketing and actions that they take. The language, rhetoric and manner associated with VSA’s UniVol programme, as well as the actions and mind-sets of UniVol volunteers, will be explored later in this thesis. Whether the programme is initiated in a way that avoids neo-colonial attitudes and actions, and is positive in regards to host community upliftment, will be important in determining the impact that younger UniVol volunteers have.

#### **2.4.2 Neoliberal critique**

The role that neoliberalism has played in reshaping IDV has been well documented. The concept of neoliberalism has been defined and analysed in multiple ways, explored as a

broader ideology, a discourse, a political force, and as a form of government (Turken *et al*, 2016). Harvey (2005: 2) argues that neoliberalism as an ideology is built on “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade”. The role of the state in the free market should remain minimal, as ‘individual freedoms’ and ‘human dignity’ are more likely to be guaranteed through free market transactions, and when all human action is placed in the control of market forces (Harvey, 2005). Such thinking is closely linked to the economic theories developed by Adam Smith, where the ‘invisible hand of the market’ is considered to enable stronger economic growth, and subsequently can advance human well-being (Willis, 2011). Harvey (2005: 19) argues that core neoliberal ideology centred around individual private property rights, the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning markets and free trade, has positioned neoliberal theory “either as a *utopian* project to realize a theoretical design for the reorganization of international capitalism or as a *political* project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites”.

Neoliberalism has been considered not solely as a broader ideology, but as a form of governance and a means to justify government practices in relation to free market practices and individualisation. Turken *et al* (2016) discuss neoliberal governance as a ‘way of doing things’. They refer to the idea of ‘neoliberal governmentality’, as proposed by Foucault (2008), to show how neoliberalism installs within society “a concept of [the] human subject as [an] autonomous, individualized, self-directing decision-making agent who becomes an entrepreneur of one self; a human capital.” Vrasti (2013: 33) refers to Foucault (2007: 91-106) to show how eighteenth century liberal solutions to centralise power and manage civil society; delegating certain responsibilities of the state to non-state agencies, communities and households to construct order “in the hearts and minds of citizens themselves”, became “indispensable condition[s]” that formulated neoliberal governance following WWII. Here, neoliberalism is used to rationalise the way in which the state acts in relation to free markets, justifying the reduction of the welfare state and the lack of emphasis towards open democracy, political, economic, and cultural justice (Harvey, 2005).

Through neoliberal governance, a succession of policies were introduced globally in the 1970’s and 1980’s at both macro and micro levels, with Margaret Thatcher’s Tory-led government (UK) and Ronald Reagan’s Republican administration (USA) becoming the

most infamous neoliberal-based states of this era (Willis, 2011). Economic growth was placed at the forefront of development, as it was postulated that free market intervention would naturally balance out social and economic inequalities. During this era, neoliberal policies established a ‘rolling-back’ of the state, as privatisation, deregulation and downsizing of the institutions and protections of many post-war states took place (Vrasti, 2013). Socially, the “rigid bureaucratic structures” and “rapacious factory bosses” of the Fordist and modernist periods were replaced by a society that gave opportunity to the individual, to expand their creative and entrepreneurial skills within the free market (Vrasti, 2013: 47). Such policy echoes neoliberal ideologies that suggest that individuals are “held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being” (Harvey, 2005: 65).

During the 1980’s, however, the negative aspects of neoliberal approaches became visible. Market-driven economies in developed countries began to experience significant social and economic problems, as inequality, poverty and social discontent rose. The ‘trickle-down’ effect that neoliberal policies proclaimed to deliver, were not reaching those in lower socio-economic groups. This forced the ‘roll-out’ phase of neoliberalism by social-democrat governments. In the 1990’s, state intervention increased throughout public sectors, as ‘roll-outs’ attempted to mitigate social problems and ensure that free markets remained competitive (Vrasti, 2013). Inequality, both at the national and international scale, became greater. Development-wise, the Washington Consensus saw a restructuring of global humanitarian aid according to neoliberal ideals. Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) began to rapidly reshape national governments that had been hit by the debt crisis. SAPs “encompassed a series of government-led policies that aimed to reduce (not eliminate) the role of the state in the running of the national economy” (Willis, 2011: 57). In numerous cases, SAPs were forced upon developing countries that were unable to pay interest on foreign debts that they had accrued from multilateral organisations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in order to continue to receive foreign ‘soft’ loans.

SAPs implemented throughout the developing world were argued to cultivate disastrous consequences (see McEwan, 2009). They were also considered neo-colonial in their attempts to intervene within developing nations. Privatisation and an influx of foreign investment resulted in increased levels of poverty, higher unemployment, and higher costs of living, further entrenching developing nations in debt (Willis, 2011). This led to a change in neoliberal processes. With global pressures to ensure that development was focused on poverty reduction, SAPs were replaced by Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) and ideas of

‘good governance’ (Willis, 2011). The Washington Consensus over this period had received strong criticism for its top-down approach to development and was also revised to incorporate ideas of ‘market friendly intervention’ and ‘good governance’, increasing transparency and effectiveness for the global poor (Georgeou, 2012). Neoliberal ideology, forms of governance and policies are still inherent throughout global society today, negatively exemplified through high global inequality rates and free market failures in cities across the world. Harvey (2005: 38) argues that after thirty years of neoliberal freedoms, there is clear evidence of power having been restored to a “narrowly defined capitalist class”, where concentrations of corporate power and a monopoly over the free market by a limited percentage of the global population has become evident. State intervention, however, has slowly increased throughout the modern era to attempt to mitigate such social and economic failures.

Neoliberal critique within IDV literature has a strong presence. There have been a number of academic debates surrounding the negative impact of neoliberal policies within IDV, challenging ideas associated with privatisation, managerialism, individualism and professionalisation. State disengagement from welfare and other social services has created opportunities for public and corporate actors to provide such services; a point considered to be “of particular significance” within international volunteering (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011: 547). Georgeou (2012) argues that as states have been ‘rolled back’, the creation of civil society as a ‘third sector’, supposedly independent from both the market and the state, has had a number of implications for development practices. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are “...conceptualised as complementing the market and as monitors of the ‘enabling state’” (Georgeou, 2012: 48), which link them with the idea of ‘new managerialism’.

New managerialism represents recently adopted monitoring and reporting processes that are “publicly aimed at increasing government efficiency but[,] in line with the neoliberal agenda of small government, privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation[,] serve to limit the size of the state sector and create a range of quasi-markets” (Roberts *et al* 2005, cited in Georgeou and Engel, 2011: 299)(also see Lyons 1998; Townsend and Townsend, 2004). Multilateral institutions and state directives have been funnelled through international volunteering organisations in the form of resources and funding. This appears on the surface to promote liberal-democratic forms of governance and limited state intervention, but simultaneously dictates the type of volunteer work that sending organisations deliver, what

areas of civil society they focus on, and where they volunteer (Georgeou and Engel, 2011). By doing this, IDV is ‘decoupled’ from the politics of global inequality and poverty, embracing a “depoliticised vision of citizenship, which promotes ‘service’ without encouraging critical assessments of social, political and economic structures” (Georgeou and Engel, 2011: 306). States and institutions in this sense heavily control aspects of IDV, albeit under the guise of neoliberalism, where it is perceived that the public sector and civil society are initiating volunteering directives. This influence of government protocol is argued to challenge the potential and credibility of NGO’s of the third sector (Lorimer, 2010). Issues around transparency and the appropriateness of volunteer assignments are questioned when they are tightly woven with state aid directives.

Concurrently, neoliberal privatisation has also been challenged in relation to the commodification of the industry. Similar to aspects of volunteer tourism and the gap year phenomenon, the involvement of private operators working under the umbrella of IDV has increased considerably in recent years. The practice of delivering development and social justice agendas through volunteering is argued to have been commodified as the private sector expands (Lyons *et al*, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013). The economic agendas of certain individual operators can outweigh development and poverty reduction objectives that are inherent to development volunteering. Simpson (2005: 450) argues that as volunteering has moved into the neoliberal marketplace, volunteer organisations are required to develop “definable” and “marketable” commodities that create unique and desirable images of organisations. This ensures that organisations remain viable in the eyes of their sponsors, generating high volunteer participation and overall profit. This is not to suggest that all IDV organisations are necessarily commodity driven in their aims and objectives. The propensity for economic success, however, has become more visible in a number of private sector-led volunteer organisations that are linked to, or associated with, the ideals of volunteering in a development context. Maintaining a competitive edge and ensuring continual access to funding remains imperative, and is reliant on the number of volunteers and the organisational reputation. These facets are closely tied to the neoliberal principles that govern the sending organisation.

The professionalisation of IDV has raised strong critique around the appropriateness of young adults volunteering in developing communities. As mentioned previously, the rise of the professionalised development era in the 1980’s mandated the use of trained professionals in the field, to address specific identified skills deficiencies within partner

organisations (Thomas, 2001; Devereux, 2008; Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Georgeou, 2012). Now, volunteers are often recruited for specific positions within larger development projects (Georgeou and Engel, 2011). Professionalisation has led to a decline in younger volunteers within development projects, as they are considered to not have the experience and skills of their older counterparts. Simpson (2005: 447) argues that this aspect of neoliberalism has therefore professionalised other forms of youth travel, such as gap years, and indeed forms of youth IDV, as an emphasis is now placed on “young people’s acquisition of global knowledge as governable subjects with market potential”. Youth volunteers work in neoliberal environments focused on citizenship and education, driven by individual motives. Neoliberal critique has challenged the way professionalisation has transformed the performance and framing of volunteering (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011). A focus of skills development and career enhancement has motivated certain forms of volunteering, superseding the needs of host communities (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Diprose, 2012; Lyons *et al*, 2012). As well as this, professionalisation is also argued to have made volunteers social mediators of neoliberalism, “providing technical skills and knowledge and using the bureaucratic protocol, rather than promoting participatory development” (Engel and Georgeou, 2011: 302). Less flexibility in this ‘instrumental’ professional approach to volunteering is considered to have inhibited the ability of volunteers to meet the needs of local communities (Georgeou and Engel, 2011).

Finally, neoliberal critique has also analysed the role of individualism within IDV. As previously discussed, neoliberal policies have placed importance on individual subjectivity within global society, emphasising the role of the ‘creative class’ in establishing individual success and achievement within the competitive open markets (Vrasti, 2013). Individuals in this neoliberal system are given choices, through a creative or a normative approach, which dictates the possibility of wealth or success. From a volunteering point of view, the neoliberal emphasis on partnerships between state and civil society actors, combined with the rise of individualism, has promoted the autonomy of the individual in the volunteering market (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011). Neoliberal critique has challenged forms of volunteering like gap years and voluntourism for marketing personal growth opportunities over altruistic volunteering motives. It suggests that some volunteer experiences are now completely focused on volunteering as a platform for volunteers to further their skills-sets and enable them to compete in the global marketplaces upon return (Simpson, 2004; 2005; Lyons *et al*, 2012).

Forms of IDV have been critiqued for their inherent focus “on the needs of the international volunteer and their own personal professional development” (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011: 549). As mentioned previously, individual aspects like curriculum vitae building, learning new skills and gaining life experience can be underlying reasons why younger volunteers commit to overseas volunteer programmes. Attaining these values replicates the “neoliberal subject [and how they are] expected to act to increase [their] value” (Turken *et al*, 2016: 34). There becomes an increased personal responsibility to become autonomous and rework the entrepreneurial self to meet the demands of neoliberal society (Walkerdine, 2006). Baillie Smith and Laurie (2011: 555) argue that in relation to IDV, this provides “a stark illustration of a decontextualized and individualised citizenship producing and being produced... and one in which ideas of social justice remain secondary, if not absent”. Problems for host communities can be compounded when the focus remains completely with the individual volunteer. Alongside issues relating to neo-colonialism and marginalisation, volunteers, and especially younger volunteers who have secondary agendas outside of programme directives, or find themselves out of their comfort zones in vulnerable situations, may be significant burdens on the host communities’ resources (Georgeou, 2012). Neoliberal individualism has created a competitive free-market environment that has encapsulated third-sector industries like volunteering as a potential platform for individual self-promotion and skills enhancement. Subjectively, this can be considered as promoting a ‘discourse of self-development’ (Turken *et al*, 2016). Georgeou and Engel (2011) argue that finding volunteer placements can now be akin to applying for jobs in the open market. It is important, therefore, to consider driving motivations behind individual volunteers and the motives behind volunteer organisations; their commitment to modern-day capacity building and partnerships that support host community upliftment and development. The commitment and impact of the volunteer will be considered in detail within this research, assessing how the benefits of IDV can effectively reach the host community, and what the best methods are to maintain this.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Over the last twenty years, research around volunteering has expanded alongside the rapid expansion of the volunteer industry itself. Numerous praises and critiques of volunteering exist, yet these are often presented in a manner that is undifferentiated. This has the potential to create confusion, as certain comments may align more appropriately with specific volunteering disciplines. This is one of the main reasons why volunteering in the broader



sense has become such a complex phenomenon. Conducting a thorough literature review of the general field of volunteering, and highlighting the distinctions and critiques of IDV, is therefore important to provide clarity and focus in this research. Initially, the definition of volunteering that best relates to the overall aims of this research was presented, in the process revealing the complex nature of the concept. From here, the historical underpinnings and subsequent growth of the wider volunteer industry were examined, detailing various sub-disciplines that are most closely associated with the IDV industry. Following this, a detailed examination of IDV was carried out, exploring the prominent post-colonial and neoliberal discourses that have permeated IDV research since the 1980's. These examinations have revealed the major criticisms directed towards the IDV industry, providing this research with an understanding of the prominent issues that have been uncovered through past case studies.

Critics argue that research around international volunteering and its relationship with development concepts remains sparse and disparate across disciplines (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Georgeou, 2012). The same can be said for research into youth IDV, which is even further under-researched among a field that has become increasingly popular. Research related to volunteer tourism and gap year travel is more prominent than international development in the context of youth. This paucity in research has created a unique opportunity to fuse together a study that considers the impacts of IDV, utilising a case study and a distinct age group that also remains relatively unexplored. This is where the following chapter will continue, reviewing literary critique around the role of younger people in IDV and what they are perceived to contribute.

# Chapter Three

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## **Youth and international development volunteering**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The exploration of IDV in Chapter Two reveals that the majority of literature centred on youth participation is associated with other volunteering sub-branches, such as gap years and volunteer tourism. As argued, the term ‘volunteering’ is complex, often combining markedly different volunteering activities when the specific sub-branch is not clearly defined. Variable assignment lengths, locations, assignment roles and volunteer requirements can produce contrasting outcomes, making it problematic to aggregate different volunteering programmes as one. Similar sentiments are made in relation to the aims and outcomes that are associated with various age groups. In the literature concerning IDV, the role of younger volunteers is often overshadowed by discussions concerning older, professional volunteers. Other imbalances are evident in the concern of host individuals, where volunteering literature in general is considered to be weighted strongly toward the volunteer and the sending organisation. Research that has been conducted in relation to youth gap year and volunteer tourism programmes is heavily focused on the experiences of the volunteers, and there is little research that explores host perceptions of younger IDV volunteers. The need for greater clarity, therefore, is imperative. What further knowledge gaps exist around younger IDV volunteers will help to shape the aims of this research.

This chapter continues the literature review process started in Chapter Two. First, the role of younger volunteers in IDV will be considered, revealing the limited breadth of research that has been conducted on a phenomenon that has become increasingly visible in global IDV practice. From here, discussion will then shift to specific the role of the host, exploring the limited existing research around host-society impact, outcome and experience. In relation to younger volunteers, the lack of research will become evident. Following the concerns surrounding hosts, this chapter will then introduce theory around local-level relationships and social capital. Research linking social capital and local-level relationships to volunteering will be discussed in detail, identifying once again the limited depth that exists in this area. The potential that such concepts hold in relation to younger volunteers, and the outcomes for both themselves and their host communities, will be considered, helping shape the research project. Following this, the formulated research questions will then be presented, detailing the clear knowledge gaps that this research will aim to address. Overall, the role that younger volunteers play within IDV can be remarkably different to their older associates, impacting on host communities in different ways and producing different experiences. By understanding in detail the perspectives that stakeholders hold, this

research will help clarify the impact that younger volunteers have in IDV, contributing useful knowledge to an area of research that thus far lacks the appropriate consideration that it deserves.

### **3.2 Theorising youth**

Before this chapter begins to explore youth involvement in IDV, it is first important to acknowledge the expansion of youth as a sub-disciplinary research area. Ansell (2005) argues that until the 21<sup>st</sup> century, research towards children and youth had been relatively neglected within social sciences. She highlights that in relation to youth, early research was predominantly focused on the negative characteristics of youth and their activities in society (Ansell, 2005: 15). Interest into youth subcultures, however, and the idea that youth formed their own specific cultural norms and values, developed. Initially linked to Marxian ideas around social classes and the impact of the political economy in the 1970's, research into youth cultures expanded to consider ideas of gender, social reproduction, and ethnicity in the 1980s and 1990s (Valentine *et al*, 1998; Ansell, 2005; France, 2016). This set a platform for a growing interest in research that seeks to explore the transition of youth from schooling systems into the workforce, the evolution from youth to 'adulthood', and other cultural practices of youth (France, 2016). France (2016) argues that within sociology, clear distinctions have become evident between research that has explored youth transitions with a focus on the political economy, compared with research that has emphasised 'creativity', and the diversity of youth through cultural practices. These theoretical underpinnings, however, have led to the extension of research today around more complex issues relating to transitions in the life course; incorporating issues related to sexuality race, disability, religion and the day-to-day lives of ordinary youth (Ansell, 2005).

Research into the social constructionism of childhood and 'youth-hood', and how youth are considered as social actors, and not passive recipients of the world around them, has also driven the expanding youth research agenda. Skelton (2008: 26) identifies how youth responses to adult agendas and the way youth commentate on the world around them have become "increasingly viewed as valid constructions, performances and interpretations of knowledge and experience". The opinions of youth, the roles they play within global social structures, and how they manufacture their own socio-spatial worlds, are now considered within numerous contexts. This has also led to a growth in research that reflects upon research methodologies, and how new participatory methods can shed light on the complex and valuable understandings that youth possess (McGarry, 2016). Overall, youth

research is now a significant sub-disciplinary area within the social sciences. The role that youth play in volunteering, in particular IDV, and their understanding of this, is of central importance to this thesis.

### **3.3 Younger volunteers' participation in international development volunteering**

Young adults, between 18 to 28 years of age have participated in IDV throughout its history. As mentioned in Chapter Two, youth were at the centre of rebuilding efforts throughout war-torn Europe following WWI and WWII, an era highlighted as the beginning of modern-day development volunteering efforts (Etmanski, 2003; Millington, 2005; Griffin, 2013). This pattern of youth involvement continued among the initial efforts of international volunteer sending agencies. The Peace Corps, following its involvement in war rebuilding ventures, had a 'youthful' image in its early overseas aid projects (Hudson and Inkson, 2005). The image of younger people in overseas volunteering efforts remained throughout the 1960's and 1970's. Youth volunteers were considered as an important element in development efforts, both at the local and international levels. In 1970, the United Nations General Assembly formed the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme and, in recognising the potential for youth volunteerism in this capacity, widened the mandate in 1976 to include "advancing the role of youth in development" (United Nations Volunteers, no date). Around this time, important youth-focused volunteer programmes emerged, such as Canada World Youth in 1971, which is considered to be an "inspirational source" for youth volunteer and exchange programmes over the last twenty years (Allum, 2012: 8). VSA's 'school leaver' programme dominated its volunteer output in the first two decades of operation, as detailed in Chapter Four (Peat, 1987).

The era of youth involvement in international volunteering, however, declined significantly following the neoliberal impacts that filtered through volunteering practices from the late 1970's. A more professionalised approach to volunteering focused on the incorporation of older volunteers, in the understanding that they could provide more 'technical skills' to local communities on account of their wider knowledge and greater life experience. Hudson and Inkson's (2005) research demonstrates how professionalisation altered the dynamic of the volunteer, as volunteer participants incorporated into their study from a wide range of sending organisations held a mean age of 49 years, with 50 per cent of participants being over the age of 50. Younger volunteers were not considered to possess the expertise and experience that IDV demanded, being unable to effectively upskill and train

partner organisations and hosts. Similar neoliberal processes still dictate IDV today, where older volunteers are favoured for their life experiences and more rounded skills-sets in the delivery of ‘skills development’, and ‘capacity building’.

At the turn of the millennium, however, it has been argued that there occurred a resurgence in youth volunteering as IDV continued to expand (Allum, 2012). At this time, the number of youth within gap year and volunteer tourism programmes began to proliferate as commercial processes amongst all volunteering sub-branches blossomed, targeting a market of younger individuals who were interested in alternative forms of travel. The International Year of the Volunteer, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001, shed light on the aims and impacts that volunteering could achieve in its various forms (United Nations Volunteers, 1997). This attracted further global attention toward volunteering. Such rapid growth is argued by Tiessen and Kumar (2013) to have made keeping track of the available volunteering options for youth ‘increasingly difficult’.

Tied with commercialism and the year of the volunteer were the neoliberal-driven concepts around global citizenship and individual development that were interwoven in youth volunteer rhetoric from the state level, culminating with the advocacy of youth within various volunteering forms by western governments (Ansell, 2008; Allum, 2012). Ansell (2008) uses gap year projects to explain how the British government in particular framed volunteering to encourage youth to commit to ‘identity work’, structuring their transition into the formal workplace by gaining the skills and experiences that volunteering offers. The notion of global citizenship is inextricably tied to this, a concept discussed in IDV by a number of scholars (most recently by Lough and Allum, 2013; Schech *et al*, 2015; Baillie Smith *et al*, 2016). Schech *et al* (2015) argue that volunteers who are linked to aid projects are envisaged by sending governments as dual ambassadors, promoting a positive image of their country overseas, whilst at the same time garnering public support at home for the development work that both themselves and the government deliver. Connected to this is the demand in the global North for international experience among youth and the weight of ‘global cosmopolitanism’, how youth can become supposed development actors and global citizens, and carry forward such values into their later lives (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Lough and Allum, 2013; Baillie Smith *et al*, 2016). The resulting outcome is ultimately considered to boost the quality of the western workforce, creating more employable and uniquely skilled individuals.

The rise of such ideals led to extended youth involvement in volunteering, ideals which are inherent today. Guzman (2006) shows that in 2006, younger volunteers' contribution to the economy of the USA was worth an estimated USD \$3 billion. Jones (2011) argues that forms of international voluntary work have rapidly changed over this period to be specifically focused toward younger people. At the international level, increasing support for incorporating young people's voices and actively engaging youth in the global development agenda was fostered through volunteering (United Nations Volunteers, no date). Although there are still doubts around the roles that youth can play within development projects, and there exists strong critique around the neoliberal processes connected to youth, the increasing number of younger people in IDV has established a need for more reflective research in this area.

### **3.4 Considering the role of the younger volunteer**

Tiessen and Heron (2012) argue that the common perception of western volunteers is overwhelmingly positive, but is often stated in literature without significant evidence to support such claims. This is especially evident surrounding younger volunteers in IDV programmes, where their roles and impacts have been relatively neglected in comparison with research that critiques youth programmes, or challenges the motivations of participants. Volunteer tourism and gap year literature, however, is comprehensive. Generally, the benefits of younger volunteers; providing empowerment, encouraging more socially responsible and community-focused attitudes and a commitment to education (see Astin *et al* 1999; Guzman, 2006; Bagnoli, 2009), outweigh discussion concerning volunteers' specific outputs. The roles of youth volunteers are often expressed in current literature as an opportunity to participate in programmes where not overly complex 'development' projects are undertaken. The volunteer is considered to be able to work within developing communities and assist in improving livelihoods to some degree, but also to learn and contribute in a capacity-type role, where they can benefit from each other's experiences and perspectives, and negotiate through various situations (Crabtree, 1998; Astin *et al*, 1999; Holdsworth, 2010; Holdsworth and Quinn, 2012). Young people are considered to have a strong passion and enthusiasm for contributing to development through volunteering, and it is suggested they are more likely to become active, both civically and politically, after their development volunteering experiences (Wijeyesekera, 2011). Jones (2011: 532) considers these inputs to play an important part in the new forms of "globalised work practice", a concept synonymous with global citizenship and individualism. Younger people's roles

within cross-cultural interaction in a development setting are considered, therefore, as a significant contribution (Jones, 2005).

Such sentiments toward youth programmes are often rather vague, however, lacking detail on the specific roles and functions that youth might fulfil whilst volunteering. However, more recent research has emerged that explores youth roles in further detail. Allum's (2012) work is perhaps the most direct in addressing this aspect. He argues that "placing a younger person in another country or community should have some demonstrable benefit and indeed at least 'do no harm'" (Allum, 2012: 21). Three main drivers of youth volunteering are identified, namely; to enhance life chances of youth volunteers in respect of social inclusion, employability and career development, to develop a knowledge base through intellectual and experiential learning, and to facilitate meaningful contributions to developing communities (Allum, 2012: 19). Tiessen and Heron (2012) have taken further steps by questioning the perceived impacts among youth volunteers themselves, revealing that while the majority of younger IDV volunteers' did reflect on the impact of their roles on the three to six month assignments they undertook, most reflection was aligned towards their own personal growth and not toward their host communities. Overall, Tiessen and Heron (2012) argued that although it was encouraging that certain participants had reflected on the negative aspects of their experiences, showing a consideration of their roles and their place in IDV, there remained a significant absence of any meaningful community impact. Indeed, Lough and Allum (2013) question whether volunteer sending organisations can implement short-term youth volunteer programmes that can achieve the conventional development goals that they are linked to, despite the increase in funding. The discussion around hosts will continue later in this chapter.

However, impact has been shown in south-to-south youth volunteer exchanges, echoed by Mati (2011). South-to-south volunteering is a variation of IDV that encourages volunteer exchanges among developing countries, negating the perceived imbalances of northern domination and neo-colonial practices that dominate the IDV landscape. Mati (2011: 3) argues that youth volunteer programmes "are bridges for people-to-people interactions that can aid a regional identity formation". Friendships, a change in attitudes and values through understanding different cultures, and learning through the actions of one another, were considered to be significant facets of younger volunteer roles that create positive experiences for both hosts and volunteers (Mati, 2011). Griffiths (2014a; 2014b) considers these interactions to formulate in 'affective spaces', producing embodied



experiences that are often “beyond the grasp of neoliberalised constructions of volunteering and global citizenship” (Baillie Smith *et al*, 2016: 17). Moving beyond such frameworks to consider how individuals are ‘affected’ through non-representational theory, the ‘hopeful possibilities’ of the volunteer dynamic, is an area in volunteer research that is expanding (Griffiths, 2014a; 2014b; Baillie Smith *et al*, 2016; Everingham, 2016; Frazer and Waitt, 2016). Whether this can apply between younger IDV volunteers from the global North, and how valuable such individual-level exchanges are, will be of important consideration in this research. Ideas surrounding relationships and bonds will be considered in more detail later in this chapter.

Schech *et al* (2015) argue that equitable partnerships are less likely to develop in short-term youth volunteering that is driven by volunteer benefit and demand for international experience. They call into question how to understand the way volunteering builds trust, which can conceivably foster equal partnerships and outcomes. This is an area of research that is underexplored across published literature, and will be explored in detail in this research. When considering VSA’s UniVol programme, this research will look to identify the key strengths and challenges that exist within it, and how it compares with other examples posited in current literature. What roles UniVols play in such circumstances will provide more detail on the roles that younger volunteers can hold in IDV, outside of the often-stated considerations that argue in favour of volunteering, but provide limited detail to support such claims. Tiessen (2012: 17) emphasises this point, stating that “there is much scope for additional research... to understand the impact of short-term IDV and if or how that impact relates to motivations...”. Understanding the various volunteer roles that are offered in the UniVol programme, the impacts of such roles, and whether volunteer motivation illustrates individualism, altruism, or both, will assist in exploring this knowledge gap.

The benefits for youth volunteers across various sub-branches are well documented, albeit less in regards to IDV. Within these discussions, there are six recurring points that are made. As mentioned previously, however, the majority of these points are considered in relation to the volunteer themselves, often ignoring the actual impact made on assignment and the perspectives of the host community. The six common benefits are as follows:

- Giving volunteers the experience of a different country and culture (Crabtree, 1998; Holdsworth; 2010; Allum, 2012; Lough *et al*, 2012)

- Fostering empowerment and personal growth among youth (Astin *et al*, 1999; Pike and Beames, 2007; Keese, 2013; Ottoni-Wilhelm *et al*, 2014)
- Increasing volunteers' cultural capital (Bagnoli, 2009; Jones, 2011)
- Fostering cross-cultural exchange (Crabtree, 1998; Jones, 2005; Lough *et al*, 2012; Tiessen and Heron, 2012; Keese, 2013; Schech *et al*, 2015)
- Increasing the employability of volunteers upon return (Holdsworth, 2010; Holdsworth and Quinn, 2012)
- Furthering younger volunteers' education and skills development (van Goethem *et al*, 2012).

The underlying notion of global citizenship is prevalent through these identified benefits, insinuating that the value of youth assignments is weighted toward the individual volunteer themselves and the skills and experiences that they can extract to further their future careers, or development interests. Whilst the younger volunteer certainly does benefit from the overall experience in a number of ways, the unbalanced emphasis placed on the youth volunteer themselves, through marketing and programme delivery, is where strong neoliberal and neo-colonial critique is founded (see Chapter Two). The issue of the host community and how a younger IDV volunteer is perceived is a significant knowledge gap that this research will look to explore; one that is inextricably tied to the various roles, functions and commitment that younger volunteers have in their partner organisations and wider host communities. This research will seek to locate the benefits for both volunteers and host community members specifically through the UniVol case study, questioning whether the programme provides balanced outcomes for stakeholders, and whether there are specific processes that can create a greater balance in outcome.

### **3.5 Host communities in international development volunteering**

One limited consideration across all volunteering sub-branches concerns the host community and how they are impacted by various volunteering experiences, an aspect that this research will explore. Such thought is deeply connected with neoliberal and neo-colonial critiques of development and volunteering in general, challenging the dominant role that western governments, organisations and volunteers themselves project and enforce during their time among host countries (see Chapter Two). Turner (2015) argues that all too often the poorest and most marginalised community members are overlooked when external organisations arrive in communities to carry out and review development-related projects. This is in

contradiction to the rhetoric that underpins various development projects (particularly in connection to volunteering), which stresses the importance of capacity building, community development and equality in the exchanges between volunteer and host in terms of their overall objectives. As commercialism, individualism and ideas around global citizenship have become increasingly visible in volunteering, emphasis on the volunteer and the future outcomes for western societies remain, often at the expense of focusing on the host. This has fostered critique that underlines the need for further volunteer research to consider host experiences, their perspectives, and the resulting impacts within host communities (Perold *et al*, 2012; Tiessen and Heron, 2012; Schech *et al*, 2015; Trau, 2015; Lewis, 2015).

In regards to IDV, recent literature has started to address issues around imbalanced volunteer processes, placing greater emphasis on the voice of the host. Howard and Burns (2015) argue that a reframing of volunteering is required to raise the perspectives and experiences of hosts, listening to their epistemologies and practices in order to understand how IDV volunteers can best support their needs and interests. IDV should “ideally contribute to the development objectives of the host organizations, but should do so in a way that respects their agency, and serves to enhance the capabilities already in place” (Perold *et al*, 2012). Yet host communities under current neoliberal volunteer structures can be “in a sense imagined as a global playground in which, but not necessarily in relation to which, citizenship can be exercised, obscuring the unequal patterns of global interdependence that define the contours of that space” (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011: 555).

Younger volunteers are argued to exemplify this neoliberal volunteer dominance when they carry into host communities a lack of experience and a need for extended support networks (Schech *et al*, 2015; Trau, 2015). This ultimately increases the burden on hosts and reinforces an imbalance in the outcomes and experiences that are created. How younger volunteers view and justify their experience has also shed light on the limited emphasis on the host community. Tiessen and Heron (2012) reveal in their study that younger volunteers generally reflect on their personal growth, applying limited consideration in regards to the impacts they have among host societies. They challenge the main purposes of IDV youth programmes, arguing that whilst personal growth in the volunteer is positive, “it is not the primary impact one might expect” (Tiessen and Heron, 2012: 54). The benefits for younger volunteers in such cases remain, whereas the host can face the reality of experiencing negative, or no measurable outcome, remaining marginalised in the volunteer dynamic (Devereux, 2008; Palacios, 2010; Lopez Franco and Shahrokh, 2015).

Previous research has, therefore, raised questions around how programmes can achieve more meaningful and sustainable impact for host communities. In order to invest in ‘genuine community engagement’ and deliver appropriate volunteer programmes, Turner (2015: 85) stresses that a significant amount of time and resources are required, focusing not only on the end outcome of assignments, but the processes that are incorporated within the overall experience. An important aspect to this is in the quality and balance of the relationships formed between the respective parties. In his study, Allum (2012) highlights that around 30% of partner organisations were considered to not make the best use of their volunteers, due to a lack of partner involvement in volunteer selection and poor communication about the aims of the programme. In parallel to this, Perold *et al* (2012) state that those host organisations in their study who ensured that volunteers were carefully selected, and managed to contribute toward their organisational goals, reported better outcomes and less frustrations with the volunteer experience. Impey and Overton (2013) emphasise that when host communities and organisations continue to receive such little attention in relation to the volunteers and the sending organisations within the volunteering dynamic, their capabilities, assets and skills are ignored, retained as ‘passive recipients’ or ‘subjects of development’. Engaging hosts in volunteer selection and assignment planning, in order to establish effective volunteer training and clear communication between both parties, is essential when attempting to achieve equality in volunteering experiences and outcomes. Trau (2015) states that IDV will only be capable in providing the capacity and development for host communities that it aims to do, when the host community is consulted and worked with collaboratively. This is reinforced by Aked (2015), who argues that developmental change within international and national volunteers is ‘stubbornly’ slow when the connections between host communities and volunteers are lacking. Understanding the cultural, economic and political landscapes of host communities, mitigating the potentially negative ramifications that volunteers can cause when they volunteer in communities without this understanding, is crucial in building a more cohesive and mutual partnership (Trau, 2015). Mutual partnership and cohesion can then ensure that host perceptions are valued equally, and that the outcomes and experiences are beneficial to both the volunteer and host.

Overall, research in IDV that focuses on host communities is beginning to draw more attention, as advocates for host community rights are emphasising the power imbalance towards the volunteer. Research in this area remains relatively limited, however. This is an area that this research will look to address. For younger volunteers in particular, the host

community perspective remains under-researched in relation to the volume of research that identifies volunteer motivations and the benefits that individual volunteers gain from their experiences. Lopez Franco and Shahrokh (2015) state that current evidence suggests that younger volunteer programmes often have a negative impact on local communities because of the volunteers' lack of knowledge, skills, experience, and their individual intentions. Detailed perspectives from hosts that support such critique, or present ways to counteract this bias, are however, lacking. This dearth of evidence has led Tiessen and Heron (2012: 54) to advocate for additional studies on the perceived impacts of younger volunteers from their host organisations, to "add additional insight into the value of volunteer abroad programmes and enable a more comprehensive picture of the impact of international volunteering". How the UniVol programme impacts on host communities, and how these communities perceive the volunteer experience, will be a key research question. What characteristics create either positive or negative experiences among hosts, and how they perceive their relationships with younger volunteers and VSA as a sending organisation, will be important in addressing knowledge gaps around younger IDV volunteers and host perceptions.

### **3.6 Local-level relationships and social capital**

As research in IDV has become aligned with community development and the impact of host communities, discussion around the importance of relationships and how these impact on community development and poverty reduction has increased. Although this area of research remains somewhat limited, there have been recent studies that connect the potential of relationships, social capital, and participatory development theories to IDV experiences and outcome. Picken and Lewis (2015) argue that as 'people-centred' and 'relationship-based' development approaches have become influential in IDV practice and delivery, the necessity to foster strong and trusting relationships in order to deliver effective volunteer programmes has increased. These relationships have been considered at two different levels; that between the host and the sending organisation, and between the host and the individual volunteer. Schech *et al* (2015) consider the concept of partnerships between host countries and sending organisations. They argue that too often partnerships between development institutions and hosts are unequally positioned, controlled by Northern donors in a way that enables them to spread risks and responsibilities and address their "(neoliberal) preoccupation with development effectiveness" (Schech *et al*, 2015: 360). Sending organisations "need to recognize that these organizations do not exist to host their international volunteers, but are

committed, resource-scarce, innovative entities operating in poor communities under challenging circumstances” (Perold *et al*, 2012: 193). By investing in more immersive, longer-term forms of volunteering, understanding host needs more clearly, and negating notions of western superiority and dominance in the relationship, partnerships have a greater chance of being sustainable and effective.

Whilst measuring the benefits of relationships is difficult to quantify through the neoliberal ‘managerialism’ principles and prioritisation of ‘outputs’ that shape IDV bureaucracy today (Georgeou and Engel, 2011; Lough and Allum, 2013; Hacker, 2015), Schech *et al* (2015: 367) state that “volunteering has above all relational impacts and these determine what, if any, concrete development outcomes can be achieved”. This has led Lough and Allum (2013) to stress that sending organisations who rely on government funding and work under such managerial frameworks need to stress the value of social capital, capacity building and relationships in addressing development objectives. “Rather than thinking in terms of projects and programmes, the way to ensure that participation is embedded is to build long-term relationships with communities and local partners” (Turner, 2015), ultimately creating better opportunities for hosts to gain reciprocal outcomes and experience positive IDV.

Relationships at the interpersonal level between the host community and the individual volunteer are considered by a limited number of academics to be essential to the quality of the experiences and outcome of IDV. Lough (2016) argues that the ability of the volunteer to establish relationships with community individuals is what defines IDV from other forms of aid and development, where the relational component is central to the role of the volunteer. How embedded the volunteer is within the host community ultimately impacts on their ability to work in a relational capacity. When relationships are maximised, this can create the conditions to foster the participatory, bottom-up approaches to development that current IDV rhetoric aims to achieve (Devereux, 2008; Turner, 2015). Aked (2015: 29) argues that as volunteering encourages individuals to “do with and for others”, it ultimately makes pro-social behaviour and forging social connections a vital part of volunteer adaptation and the overall progress that is made. Her work utilises psychosocial wellbeing and social change theory to consider the interpersonal processes and relationships that influence IDV interventions, providing the most detail on the roles that relationships play within the volunteering dynamic. She states that volunteer relationships are often built informally, where “the act of doing together and networked reciprocity trigger wellbeing-

enhancing experiences which support individual actors to do well and actors to do well together” (Aked, 2015: 32). This relatedness and interpersonal wellbeing that is fostered through volunteer relationships is considered to add significant value to the social change efforts of IDV, forging competency, empowerment, ownership and commitment in not only the volunteer, but also the host (Aked, 2015).

The strength of social connections and relatedness depend on certain factors, however. Lough (2016: 7) argues that the formation of trust and solidarity between the volunteer and host is important, something that is strengthened through communication and “repeated positive reciprocal exchange”. These factors are dependent on the volunteers’ ability to gain proximity to community members in their physical space, their language capacity, and their cultural understanding (Lough, 2016). Embedding into communities and fostering relationships requires a level of understanding and sensitivity from the volunteer, as well as time to form such relations; similar to the relations formed between communities and sending organisations that were discussed earlier in this chapter. This again presents the opportunity for richly ‘affective spaces’ to flourish when the relationship dynamic becomes stronger, thus solidifying the compassion and trust between one another (Griffiths, 2014a; 2014b; Baillie Smith *et al*, 2016).

Discussions of interpersonal relationships, capacity building, trust and reciprocity parallel ideals of social capital, and how it can reduce dependency, enhance capability, and ultimately present spaces where volunteers can contribute toward the current networks and community action that exists (Perold *et al*, 2012; Howard and Burns, 2015). Initially traced back to its roots in sociology, social capital has become a significant feature in development policy since the 1990’s (Potter *et al*, 2008; Schaaf, 2013); considered to “illuminat[e] the effects of informal social relations on broader development objectives” (Barraket, 2005: 74). Social capital “refers to features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam *et al*, 1993: 167). Importance is placed on the “structure of relations” between and among actors, which can change and flow between the relations that actors form and facilitate (Coleman, 1988: S98). Works by Putnam (1993; 1995; 2000) and Coleman (1987; 1988) are argued to have been ‘seminal’ for the inspiration of many modern-day studies of social capital across a wide range of social science fields (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 229). Social capital has become a popular area of development research, as it is suggested to influence “...patterns of economic and social change... determining the quality of development” (Bebbington and

Carroll, 2002). Portes (1998: 2) argues that because social capital focuses on the positive aspects of sociability, showing that non-monetary forms of capital can be important sources of power and influence at numerous scales (from international to local communities), it has subsequently gained a “novelty and heuristic power” among academic and public spheres.

Social capital theory has not been invulnerable to critique, however. Hustinx *et al* (2013: 1183) state that social capital is still a “fuzzy concept”, and that there is no generally accepted conceptualisation of the theory within international literature (van Deth, 2003; cited in Hustinx *et al*, 2013: 1183). Beyond the agreed notions that social capital is entrenched in social relations and that it provides actors with resources that support well-being, Torche and Valenzuela (2011) state that there are a myriad of definitions and emphases, ranging from network structures and the content of such networks, to individual or collective resources, right from small groups to entire countries and cultures (see Jones, 2005; Weisinger and Salipante, 2005). It is this vague nature that has harvested criticism around the applicability of social capital, challenging whether it is actually appropriate if it cannot be empirically measured or defined (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2002; Schuller, 2007). Yeung (2004: 480) argues, therefore, that “we must bear in mind that social capital is not a uniform notion, but includes both constructive and dispersing mechanisms as well as connective and disentangling elements”.

Tied to the ‘chaotic’ definition of social capital are the inherent power imbalances that are argued to exist at a multitude of levels. Fine (1999; 2007; 2008) has been particularly critical of social capital at a broader political level, arguing that as it has been adopted by large global institutions like the World Bank as a means to address development, it has subliminally increased their control and authority. Harriss (2001) identifies the importance of government decentralisation to social capital principles, shifting emphasis towards community action and moving away from ‘top-down’ development strategies. Yet he, alongside Fine (2008: 264) suggest that social capital has become “an instrument of central authority parading as decentralized participation”, owing to the way it has been advocated for by global institutions as a means to solve development issues. In this sense, social capital is considered to have encouraged neoliberal ideals of reducing state involvement, simultaneously enabling the World Bank to “broaden its agenda whilst retaining continuity with most of its practices and prejudices which include the benign neglect of macro-relations of power... and decentralized initiatives” (Fine, 1999: 12).



Theoretically, there have also been critiques of social capital and power in relation to the limited acknowledgement of broader political processes that can affect its impact. Harriss and De Renzio (1997) argue that the role of NGOs and community groups, and of the social capital that can exist within communities and groups, ultimately depends on the broader political settings by which they are governed. They identify that ‘inequalities of power and resources’ from the political arena can heavily devalue the perceived worth of social capital, whereby groups who do possess strong social capital can lack the resources and other assets to move forward and develop (Harriss and De Renzio, 1997: 927). Power issues can also be evident at the grassroots level itself, where issues of race, class, gender and identity can exclude individuals from collective action and social capital networks (Harriss, 2001). Fine (2007: 572) argues that ideas of linking, bonding, and bridging within social capital are mutually contradicted across these “traditional social variables”, overlooking how individuals can be excluded in societies, as well as how social pressures can become perversely negative, in the sense of criminal groups and organisations.

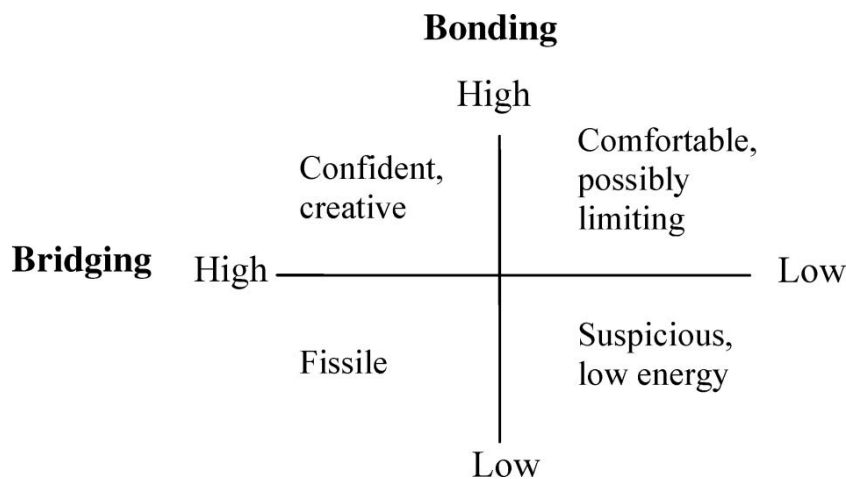
Both Harriss (2001) and Fine (2007) support Portes’ (1998: 21) consensus, which suggests that social capital’s greatest “theoretical promise” lies not within its attempt to address broader issues across global civil society, but in exploring the various social structures and relationships that individuals build between one another and what can result from such processes. As a ‘catch-all’ terminology to address overarching social issues, social capital becomes ambiguous and multifarious, supporting neoliberal state reduction and failing to adequately theorise development issues. Harriss (2001: 33) also argues that “while the energy for change lies within the community... the successful realisation of the potentials of participative, community-level action also involves networks amongst actors at different levels”. The role of a volunteer, therefore, can support this notion. At the individual level, exploring relationships and how social capital is tied to interpersonal connections in the IDV context has merit. This thesis will look to extend on such ideals, to emphasise the value of relationships in volunteering between the volunteer and the host at the micro level.

### **3.6.1 ‘Bridging’ versus ‘bonding’ social capital**

The two main forms of social capital that explain the different types of relationships that are formed between actors have been revealed through the progression of social capital research. These are ‘bridging’ and ‘bonding’ forms of social capital. ‘Bonding’ social capital “refers to links with others who are broadly similar in kind”, whereas ‘bridging’ social capital refers to

“the links a community [or individual] has with others that are different, to whatever degree” (Schuller, 2007: 15).

Bonding social capital is considered to be more exclusive, generally established through close-knit families and communities which create a very personalised and continuous bond between actors (Weisinger and Salipante, 2005; Torche and Valenzuela, 2011; Willis, 2011). These bonds are described by Putnam *et al* (1993: 173) as “horizontal” networks, which are considered to bring together “agents of equivalent status and power”. This type of ‘thick’ social capital, where relations are developed at a personal level and maintained on a regular basis, is argued by Torche and Valenzuela (2011: 189) to manifest almost as an “involuntary by-product” of the relationships, where “trust is often indistinguishable from familiarity, virtually always an unconscious bet...”. More trust exists in such relationships than forms of bridging social capital, as actors have stronger interests in smaller communities or family networks, and face significant repercussions if bonded social capital and trust are lost between actors. Forms of bonding social capital have been used as effective defensive strategies against poverty within small, localised communities to ‘get by’, with community members pooling resources and working collectively (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000; Onyx and Osburn, 2005).



**Figure 3.1: The distinctions between ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital (Source: Schuller, 2007: 17)**

Alternatively, bridging social capital represents Putnam *et al*’s (1993: 173) “vertical” networks, which link “unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence”. This form of social capital develops contact with actors who exist outside of close interpersonal family and community networks, where such relationships are historically

shorter in nature and can potentially be more volatile (Larsen *et al*, 2004; Fujiwara and Kawachi, 2008; Willis, 2011; Zahra and McGehee, 2013). Figure 3.1 represents various outputs when bridging or bonding social capital is either high or low between actors. For example, locally bonded communities may reach out to groups outside of the community to seek support or gather information (McGehee *et al*, 2010; Zahra and McGehee, 2013), whether this be through a direct need, or as an attempt to go beyond the idea of ‘getting by’, and as an attempt to ‘get ahead’ in a development sense (Barr, 1998, cited in Zahra and McGehee, 2013: 27).

Thinking around the establishment of bridging social capital is claimed to have originated from Granovetter’s (1973; 1974) ideas around the ‘strength of weak ties’, which he discusses in relation to the indirect influences outside family and close-friend circles that serve as an informal employment referral system (Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Such social capital, therefore, creates ties among members who are not otherwise affiliated with the traditional bonded communities, but can provide assistance in some form (Bebbington and Carroll, 2002; Weisinger and Salipante, 2005). A central aspect in developing effective forms of bridging capital, however, is ensuring that parity is apparent between both parties. Much has been written about the issues surrounding dependency and the hierarchical relations between actors (Bebbington and Carroll, 2002; Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2002; Jones, S, 2005; McEwan, 2009). Putnam *et al* (1993) argue that in this form, social trust and cooperation cannot be sustained, which makes vertical flows potentially less reliable. Weisinger and Salipante (2005: 33) argue, therefore, that bridging social capital can only be produced if social ties “engender the mutuality (mutual respect) and the maintenance of tangible ties that are characteristic of pluralistic diversity”.

Within IDV forms, Perold *et al* (2012) argue that bridging social capital is most common. The very nature of placing volunteers in communities “brings together people with different levels of privilege and power – as well as those from backgrounds, cultures and races” (Perold *et al*, 2012: 190). Volunteers can link to forms of bonded social capital within communities, through partner organisations, groups and associations, by fostering relationships. Dale and Newman (2008) discuss the propensity for civic society organisations and volunteers to bridge groups together through networks (discussed later), believing that such relations create a greater capacity for future linking ties and a ‘greater critical mass’ for community change. This discussion of bridging and bonding capital within IDV, however, remains relatively superficial, lacking sufficient detail. Distinction between

younger and older volunteers in this sense is lacking in literature, alongside whether the impacts of youth compare or contrast to the limited evidence that links social capital, relationships and IDV.

### **3.6.2 Norms, networks and trust**

The effectiveness of social capital lies within social norms, networks established among groups and individuals, and relationships built around trust. Such social constructions are key aspects considered in social capital literature. Norms within society refer to the “portion of social organisation which tells persons what to do and not do, the social intelligence that moves the particular pieces on the chessboard” (Coleman, 1987: 134). Norms are considered as “expectations about actions” (Coleman, 1987: 134), which exhibit what is considered appropriate behaviour in civil society; actions that are deemed right and wrong. Norms that are central to the creation of social capital are argued to be informal in nature, and focus on establishing cooperation between groups and individuals, fused together by mutual expectations, values and understandings (Bebbington and Carroll, 2002; Onyx and Osburn, 2005; Brown and Ferris, 2007; Heimtun, 2007; Potter *et al*, 2008). Fukuyama (2000) considers traditional virtues like honesty, keeping commitments, performances of duty and reciprocity as forms of cooperation that enable individuals and groups to develop social capital and collectivity. Scholars argue that the generalised norm of reciprocity is an important aspect of forming bonds and creating space for social capital to develop (Putnam *et al*, 1993; Brown and Ferris, 2007; Heimtun, 2007).

Putnam *et al* (1993) highlight two forms of reciprocity, balanced and generalised. Balanced reciprocity refers to a “simultaneous exchange of items of equivalent value”, whereas generalised reciprocity refers to a “continuing relationship of exchange that is at any given time unrequited or imbalanced, but involves mutual expectations that a benefit granted now should be repaid in the future” (Putnam *et al*, 1993: 172). Reciprocity in IDV is considered to exist in its generalised form, with commentators emphasising the imbalanced outcomes that volunteers gain over their host communities (discussed earlier, and in Chapter Nine). Lough (2016: 18), however, argues that although gaining full reciprocity may be a challenge, the prioritisation of mutual exchange and cooperation can “offer meaningful alternatives over less equitable forms of aid”. Mutually understood social norms like reciprocity and cooperation create a space for knowledge, skills and financial transfer to take place, which can build to become significantly beneficial for both volunteers and hosts as the relationships and social capital strengthens. Individuals who are involved in such structures

can alternatively be inhibited and marginalised, if they choose to act against such social norms that are interlinked between societies, groups, or individuals with whom they interact. The power to utilise social capital that is built through societal norms lies in the ability to “act in the interests of the collectivity” (Coleman, 1988: S104), which in turn strengthens relationships and cooperation among all those within such structures.

Social capital is argued to exist within social structures and the ‘space between people’, not within the individual (Coleman, 1990; Edwards and Foley, 1998; Onyx, 2005). Social networks established between individuals and groups are considered, therefore, to be the “most common function attributed to social capital” (Portes, 1998: 12). Social networks refer to the groups or associations within which individuals interact, which create relationships and links between members. Such systems are considered to offer access to “resources of a material or (possibly) non-material kind” (Mohan and Mohan, 2002: 192), allowing individuals to build social capital and in a development context, “bridg[e] some of the barriers to sustainable community development” (Dale and Newman, 2008: 9). Putnam *et al* (1993: 173) argue that denser community networks can increase potential costs to defectors, form robust norms of reciprocity, facilitate communication and improve information flows, and embody success in collaboration. The ability to relate and interact with members in such networks, as argued by Weisinger and Salipante (2005: 44), becomes a “means to those collectively defined ends”. As Putnam *et al* (1993: 169) state, “social networks allow trust to become transitive and spread: I trust you, because I trust her and she assures me that she trusts you”. Individuals are then able to access the wider resources for either personal gain or for a collective interest (Heimtun, 2007; Fujiwara and Kawachi, 2008). It is argued that social ties in such networks work by exclusion, which both continually tie people in networks for a fear of being excluded, but also strengthen social capital through its exclusive nature (Putnam *et al*, 1993; Portes, 1998; Mohan and Mohan, 2002).

Recent IDV literature suggests that social ties and networks are a strong component in building social capital within volunteering; gaining assets, building reciprocal and trust-based relationships, and forming cooperation in different social contexts. Aked (2015) considers volunteer relationships to “develop in a network of actors exchanging time, skill and energy”. This networked reciprocity can encourage interaction and collective action among individuals, creating opportunities through access to previously inaccessible parts of society (Aked, 2015). Because volunteers have more time to build relationships and operate

in a more autonomous manner than other development actors, their ability to foster and mobilise ground level networks can be greater (Howard and Burns, 2015). They have the ability to establish social networks, bringing organisations and individuals together, or tapping into existing network structures to connect groups together (Aked, 2015). As a result, networking and social capital have the potential to be valuable resources when relationships are made between the volunteer and host, supplying agency and empowerment to marginalised groups and extending development opportunities (Dale and Newman, 2008; Yuen, 2013; Lough *et al*, 2014).

Trust has also been highlighted in social capital literature as a crucial element for maintaining successful networks and ensuring that norms are in place and adhered to (Patulny *et al*, 2003; Torche and Valenzuela, 2011; Willis, 2011). From a social capital perspective, Fukuyama (2000) argues that modern societies are considered to be made up of overlapping ‘radii of trust’, which are linked both around and within social networks and groups. Trust is an important aspect of social capital, as the “trustworthiness of the social environment” ensures whether obligations will be repaid among actors, and the extent of the obligations held (Coleman: 1988, S102). In its positive form, trust enables individuals to reduce transaction costs, promote capacity building, build confidence to invest in collective or group activities, and maintain relationships with strangers (Jones, S, 2005; McGehee *et al*, 2010; Torche and Valenzuela, 2011). Trust, therefore, has the potential to foster social capital for both donors and recipients. Recipients gain access to resources and networks, and for donors, it “yields approval and expedites transactions because it ensures against malfeasance” (Portes, 1998: 9).

Yet not only does trust as an element of social capital reap benefits for individuals, but it also works to ensure that individuals within certain social structures avoid its negative consequences, such as the price of distrust. Diego Gambetta’s (1988; 2000) research exemplifies how individuals within social structures continue to maintain trusting relationships to ensure that they are not excluded from accessing forms of social capital. In this form, trust works in such a way as to ensure that “when offered the chance, he or she is not likely to behave in a way that is damaging to us, and trust will typically be relevant when at least one party is free to disappoint the other, free enough to avoid a risky relationship, and constrained enough to consider that relationship as an attractive option” (Gambetta, 2000: 217). Trust, therefore, has the power to both facilitate collective action and impact individuals, whether it is positive, in building social capital, or negative, in marginalising

individuals. The negative connotations to trust in IDV can be linked to power imbalances between hosts and individuals. When volunteers are considered to have more power in host communities, their actions can be damaging when mistakes are made, due to the influence they gain as a perceived 'expert'. "As foreigners and white, people are likely to hear and trust their word..." (Perold *et al*, 2012: 190).

In interpersonal relations, however, the ability to gain trust among hosts can have significantly positive outcome when volunteers attempt to exchange capacity and fulfil appropriate assignments and objectives. Howard and Burns (2015) consider the volunteering space to be 'mutable', where trust is important in maintaining relationships where challenges and barriers exist. It has the potential to dismantle hierarchy and privilege, creating more open channels of communication to foster reciprocal exchanges and stabilise connections (Schech *et al*, 2015; Lough, 2016). This relatedness can ultimately increase participation among hosts and encourage them to interact in new projects and programmes, creating 'socially meaningful' processes (Aked, 2015). Without the trust of local organisations and individuals, evidence suggests that achieving volunteering objectives is overly difficult (see Picken and Lewis, 2015). Trust, therefore, can be a valuable asset for IDV that aims for capacity building and mutual exchange at the interpersonal level. How effective trust and other aspects of social capital and relationship building are within younger IDV volunteer relationships, however, is an area of research that has thus far received little consideration.

### **3.6.3 How relationships and social capital shape this research**

The above discussion has shown the potential that relationships and social capital can hold between actors at the individual level. In relation to IDV, recently published research has begun to explore the role that relationships play in volunteer interaction. The value of certain forms of social capital; namely the benefits of trust, the value of networking, and bridging social capital in particular, have been discussed in literature that considers the broader implications of volunteer involvement in host communities. This is a field that has the potential to offer significant worth in understanding the IDV dynamic and value of volunteer interaction, yet it is relatively new and underexplored. In relation to the youth volunteering context, discussion around relationships, social capital, and IDV is limited. This research will extend on the ideas presented above, to situate the value of relationships within youth IDV and understand how they impact on the volunteer experience for both hosts and volunteers.

### **3.7 An overview of the research questions**

Throughout this chapter, and earlier in Chapter Two, an in-depth exploration of published literature has been conducted to identify areas of research related to younger IDV volunteers. These chapters have revealed the broader theoretical considerations concerning IDV, the role of younger volunteers and host community impacts. In doing so, the contestation between certain relevant theories has been outlined, identifying the key research areas where knowledge is lacking, and how this research can contribute toward these knowledge gaps. Knowledge gaps help form the basis of this research, which aims to illustrate the various impacts that younger volunteers can have on volunteering assignments. By emphasising where knowledge is plentiful, and where it is limited, these two chapters have enabled appropriate research questions to be established. This section will now re-visit the research questions that were presented in Chapter One, and discuss in detail how these research questions will be considered. The research questions are as follows;

1. What impacts of UniVol assignments, as perceived by volunteers and VSA staff, can challenge the roles that younger volunteers can hold in IDV?
2. How does motivation among younger volunteers shape assignment outcome, experience, and future career pathways?
3. What are the views of local communities/organisations in regards to the impact of younger volunteers?
4. How does the ability to foster local-level relationships between younger volunteers and host communities/partner organisations contribute to the volunteering experience?

RQ #1 aims to evaluate the UniVol programme in detail, shedding light on the impacts that younger volunteers can have in the field. Although published research already identifies certain impacts, as shown throughout this chapter and in Chapter Two, the levels of detail and explanation are often limited. In identifying the impacts the UniVol programme, this research will be able to confirm whether such elements parallel the statements made in published literature, or whether they do not. The level of analysis and detail that this research will conduct should add significantly to the knowledge pool around the positives and negatives of younger volunteering, exploring the reasons as to why they occur and how they are compounded. RQ #1 will also reveal aspects that are unique to the UniVol programme, and assess whether these factors hold similar importance in relation to wider youth volunteer programmes. This will identify the role that younger New Zealand



volunteers, and indeed VSA volunteers, fulfil within global IDV, and how they compare and contrast with other global examples. The UniVol programme has not been researched in this capacity before, allowing this thesis to break new ground in this area. The processes that VSA use to prepare and manage their younger volunteers will be assessed in terms of their distinctiveness and effectiveness to deliver successful youth IDV programmes.

RQ #2 aims to connect volunteer motivation to assignment experience, outcome, and the future decisions that youth volunteers make. The literature review acknowledges the large volume of literature around volunteer motivation in a variety of sub-branches. Published literature often argues that individual factors are favoured over altruistic reasons for younger volunteers in their volunteering commitment, and that these motivational factors do not often overlap. Yet knowledge gaps are evident in the way motivation is changed through the IDV experience and how it affects future decisions among volunteers. By considering motivation in this light, this question aims to consider whether altruistic and individual aims are by no means mutually exclusive; whether there are examples where younger volunteers are motivated by both personal and non-personal reasons, and whether this carries through in their experiences and future career choices. Reviewing UniVol experiences in this light will contribute to knowledge around youth in IDV, adding to motivation literature and to the limited research on future volunteer pathways.

RQ #3 considers the need for further research from the host community perspective, by exploring the experiences of local individuals, organisations and communities in regards to hosting UniVol volunteers. The literature review chapters identify a lack of research on the perspectives of hosts, in relation to the perspectives of volunteers and sending organisations. Assessing how local stakeholders perceive their experiences, detailing both positive and negative aspects, will provide a balance to this research and contribute significantly to this emerging field of IDV research. Similar in nature to RQ #1, addressing RQ #3 will add an extra level of detail to existing research that has only tentatively considered issues related to younger IDV volunteers, as seen by hosts. What impacts hosts' experiences, what outcomes they gain, and what they consider to be appropriate steps in order to improve youth IDV experiences, and UniVol experiences in general, should produce useful data to address this knowledge gap.

Finally, RQ #4 will aim to understand how the theory of relationships and local-level interactions can impact on the experiences and outcomes for both hosts and volunteers. This chapter explores the relatively new area of research linking IDV volunteering, relationships

and social capital. The lack of consideration in relation to younger volunteers within this limited area of research is evident. By raising the question of relationships between the younger volunteer, in this case UniVols, and the host, this research will aim to assess how influential relationship building is and what it offers to the volunteering dynamic. Overall, this research aims to provide a unique research angle that looks to situate the relevance of younger volunteers within IDV, understanding their impact in the field, the relationships that they build, and the implications from a development perspective on host community members. The role that social capital plays, considering ideas of trust, reciprocity, bonds and networking opportunities, will be an important part of the research process. UniVol relationships with hosts, and what can result from strong connections, will again contribute to knowledge around youth in IDV, identifying where they can be most effective and the requirements necessary to translate this to wider youth IDV processes.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has developed from the discussion in Chapter Two, to further explore published knowledge around the role of younger IDV volunteers, the voice of the host community, and the potential of relationships. By exploring these factors in more detail and conducting an extensive literature review, these two chapters have enabled this research to formulate an identity and become more focused in its areas of analysis. The role of younger volunteers in IDV remains relatively unconsidered in relation to the wealth of available literature on regular volunteers and their impacts. Parallel to this is the limited acknowledgement of the host perspective, as available literature remains heavily biased in its consideration of individual volunteers, sending organisations, and the western nations where the majority of volunteers originate. In revealing this dearth of knowledge, this chapter has culminated in the formulation of four research questions that will guide this research in its main avenues of enquiry. By exploring the case study of the UniVol programme, a programme that has thus far had limited internal, and no external, research evaluation, this thesis will consider the impact that younger volunteers have in IDV to break new ground. It aims to present results that can be translated across youth IDV programmes, to effectively understand where younger volunteers can be most effective in delivering outcomes, not only for themselves, but for the host community, and the support networks and processes that are necessary to aid this. Learning from the challenges faced by both hosts and volunteers will be important in contributing to this data. Establishing a sound theoretical framework and identifying

knowledge gaps now enable this research to progress to the contextual and methodological discussions that follow in Chapters Four and Five.

# Chapter Four

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**Project context: VSA's UniVol programme**

## **4.1 Introduction**

For the purposes of this research, the volunteer-sending programmes that VSA (Volunteer Service Abroad) co-ordinate, specifically its University Volunteer (UniVol) programme, were explored, in order to examine the experiences and impacts that younger volunteers have in IDV contexts. Chapters Two and Three have identified the knowledge gaps surrounding the UniVol programme and wider youth IDV in general. Before presenting detailed findings, it is important to provide contextual detail on VSA as an organisation, and the specific role of the UniVol programme. This chapter will review the history of VSA as a non-profit volunteer agency, the theory behind its establishment, and the philosophy and mantra that VSA maintain through their current programmes. Following this, an in-depth examination of VSA's UniVol programme will ensue, exploring the growth and establishment of the programme, the nexus between the UniVol concept and VSA, as well as the agenda that the UniVol programme has adopted and how it relates to VSA's broader aims and objectives. The overseas settings where UniVols have been based will also be discussed, exploring in particular the four field sites where data was collected from hosts and VSA field staff. In doing this, it is the aim of this chapter to situate VSA's UniVol programme within the wider international development volunteering field, and discuss how it fits within this research. Understanding the scope of the UniVol programme, the philosophy of VSA as an organisation, and the underlying reasons why volunteering is needed in those host communities where UniVols volunteer, will provide supporting evidence for the data presented in later results chapters.

## **4.2 Volunteer Service Abroad, New Zealand**

Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA) was established in 1962, and has evolved over time to become New Zealand's largest volunteering agency working within the context of international development. Formed in an era when modernisation theories of development were *en vogue*, following the end of the World War II, Western countries developed policies to assist 'developing' nations in industrial and technological advancement. Agencies that were established in an effort to provide technical assistance through volunteering before the foundation of VSA, including Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) in the UK, in 1958, and the American Peace Corps movement, in 1961, were considered to have gathered wider public support "to such an extent that people in New Zealand were calling on their government to follow suit" (Peat, 1987: 2). Following an initiative in 1962 between various actors from the New Zealand University Students Association, other New Zealand

universities, training colleges, churches, employer organisations, youth groups, service clubs and government departments, who discussed issues around humanitarian aid and the opportunities for volunteer workers overseas, VSA was subsequently founded (Carew, 2002). In an effort to work around what was a minimal yearly budget, VSA was able to develop partnerships with businesses and organisations in developing countries. They established financial agreements to share volunteer costs, allowing the first VSA volunteers to be sent in 1963 on teaching projects to Thailand and then to Samoa (Peat, 1987; Carew, 2002; Nichol, 2013).

VSA's early purpose was to "help... overseas communities striving to make progress... and to contribute towards building friendship between nations" (Clark, 1978). Early volunteer programme initiatives established by VSA, specifically the School Leaver Programme set up in 1964, became catalysts for drawing large public interest and general support for the organisation. The VSA Annual General Meeting in 1965 "glowed with accolades not only about the performance of the school leavers, who were media darlings, but also about the way the whole programme was expanding numerically and geographically" (Peat, 1987: 8). Over its ten year existence from 1964 to 1974, the School Leaver Programme sent 318 seventeen and eighteen year olds on one-year assignments in South East Asia and the Pacific Islands (Clark, 1978; Carew, 2002; Nichol, 2013). By the 1970's, however, neoliberal and alternative approaches to development began to gradually refine the make-up of VSA's volunteer profile (Peat, 1987). The ethical practices of school leavers and the overall volunteer experience were challenged, questioning whether the initial intentions of developing friendship and goodwill through volunteering appropriately emphasised New Zealand's developmental role and agency (Peat, 1987). As a result of this, the number of older, professional volunteers rose exponentially, alongside the development of more specialised volunteer assignments (Clark, 1978). By 1978, there were 106 adult volunteers on assignment. This was considerably higher than in previous decades, which were dominated by a high percentage of younger volunteers (Peat, 1987). Emphasis was placed on delivering development education back to the New Zealand public, through the experiences of volunteers on assignment, as younger volunteers were phased out of VSA programmes.

More specialised assignments delivered by experienced and professional volunteers were prioritised during this era of neoliberal reform through the 1970s the 1980s, as volunteer opportunities increased and VSA continued to expand. The friendship-based ideal

from the 1960s waned, as emphasis shifted toward achieving and promoting social and economic development through volunteering. In the 1985 revision of VSA's core constitution, more weight was applied toward the "responsibility to increase awareness within New Zealand of issues of social and economic justice and human rights in the developing world" (Peat, 1987: 25). Such changes are still visible in VSA's approach toward volunteering today, as the majority of volunteer projects focus on filling specialised skill positions within partner organisations. Much like the progression of volunteering in general, however, the rhetoric that volunteer projects are delivered in continues to change in line with new theoretical discourses that have become incorporated within development and development volunteering. Currently, VSA work closely to the principles put forward by MFAT, one of their major funders, centred on concepts of 'sustainable economic development' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016: 6). As noted in Chapter Two, volunteering dialogue has progressed from theory around geopolitical and economic modernisation in the 1950's and 1960's, to ideas of social and economic justice in the 1980's, and onto more current theories supporting mutuality and reciprocity, capacity building and founding partnerships with developing communities that host volunteers. VSA's rhetoric parallels broader volunteering vernacular, as its understanding of development 'continues to evolve' (Carew, 2002).

Encouraging local led-participation, equitable distribution of resources, capacity building and strengthening local initiative feature strongly in VSA's current commitment toward volunteering (Carew, 2002). Its strategic intent for 2011-2015 reinforced this discourse: "VSA focuses on people-centred development. We give great importance to *manaakitanga* which means we value: respectful partnerships, working and learning together, cross-cultural understanding, and the spirit of volunteering" (Johnston *et al*, 2012: 54). Ideas around partnership and empowering locally-driven development are also expressed through VSA's website. The website presents vernacular including "locally identified, locally relevant, and locally delivered" assignments, transferring skills 'sustainably', enriching society through 'cross-cultural exchanges', and approaching volunteering through "appropriate sustainable development, improv[ing] quality of life, and help[ing] build self-determining communities" within their *modus operandi* (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2015b). Emphasis on volunteers acting as a 'catalyst', in providing skills and knowledge-sharing opportunities with partner organisations and communities, is featured strongly throughout recent marketing and information brochures (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2012). This language reinforces ideas around developing equal partnerships and

reciprocal learning. It aims to avoid connotations of dominance and ‘othering’ upon developing communities, something that earlier modernist ideas centred on ‘assistance’ and ‘aid’ were heavily criticised for (see Chapters Two and Three). Visual material, like the photographs and videos used for promotional, marketing and informational material, further reinforce reciprocity and partnership (see Volunteer Service Abroad, 2015; Volunteer Service Abroad, 2012). This supports VSA’s intent to impact upon quality of life “through volunteer programmes that address key development needs in partnership with local communities and in private, public and civil society organisations” (Johnson *et al*, 2012: 4)

From 2011, VSA has worked specifically in the Pacific region, through eight countries within Melanesia, Polynesia and Timor-Leste. This specific focus within the Pacific region is in line with changes in foreign and development policy initiated by the current National government in New Zealand, which contributes upwards of 90% of VSA’s total funding. This dependent relationship requires VSA to work within the aims of the government, which has implemented a strong focus on initiating economic-based policies to enable growth and development in the Pacific region (see Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016). VSA has co-ordinated a variety of volunteer programmes throughout its history, from school leaver and teacher training programmes, working in capacity with other organisations, such as United Nations volunteers, to its mainstay adult volunteer scheme.

VSA’s major programme is currently run in conjunction with the UniVol programme, and another recent initiative that builds strategic partnerships with private sector organisations, government agencies and NGO’s to send staff on relevant volunteering assignments (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2012; Nichol, 2013). These current programmes cater to a wide range of personalities and placements, ensuring VSA remains the largest New Zealand based volunteer agency. Currently, VSA’s regular adult volunteering programmes are generally two years in length, but can range from six months to a year for more specialised assignments. The introduction of shorter assignments are in line with MFAT’s encouragement of shorter, highly skilled assignments, as opposed to traditional two year roles (KI 100). Assignments are based in a variety of areas within civil society, economic development and public sector services, which aim to fulfil precise job descriptions relating to skills and experiences that are required by partner organisations (Hudson and Inkson, 2005). Professionally skilled volunteers are utilised within VSA’s strategic partnership programme, linking New Zealand organisations with partner organisations who request “focused and specialised input to on-going work” (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2012: 10).



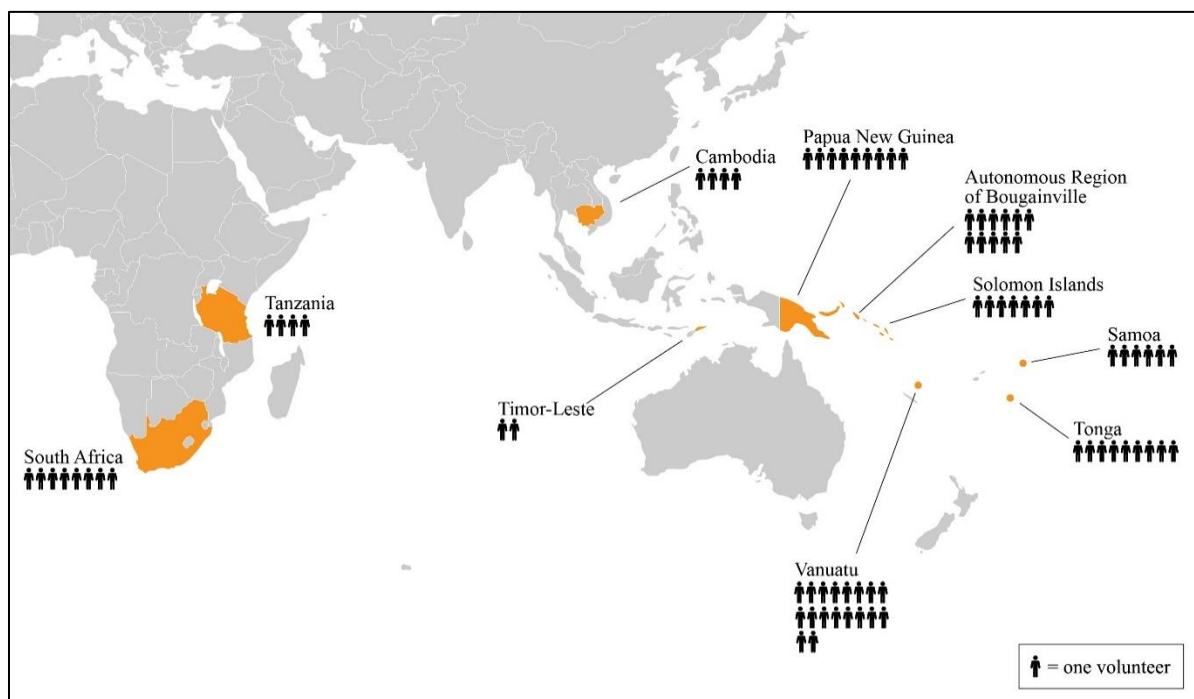
Assignment lengths can vary from one to two month assignments, to one to two year longer-term placements, with a strong focus on ‘providing expertise’ from strategic partnerships through development volunteering. Finally, VSA’s UniVol programme, which is particularly relevant to the focus of this thesis, sends University students on ten to twelve month assignments that fit within the frameworks around economic, civil society and public sector development.

### **4.3 The UniVol programme**

VSA’s UniVol programme was established in 2006, in partnership with the Geography Department at the University of Otago, in New Zealand. Initially, the youth programme was run as a two-year pilot programme. VSA, in their attempts to identify and involve younger New Zealanders within their volunteering projects, suggested that university students, specifically those involved in development studies, “would have more to offer our partner organisations, and would reinforce VSA’s brand of sending skilled New Zealanders to work in development” (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2008: 4). As mentioned previously, VSA’s initial success was built around younger volunteers, both school leavers and prospective tertiary students. They were slowly phased out, however, during the professionalisation era of volunteering in the 1970’s and 1980’s. At the turn of the century, younger people were again becoming incorporated into the ‘development volunteer’ identity (see Allum, 2012). This was highlighted by the International Year of the Volunteer in 2001, a global event established by the United Nations to promote the role of volunteers (United Nations Volunteers, 1997). VSA established its UniVol programme, and opened the opportunity to Otago Geography students who held a vested interest in development work, and had gained the required training within development studies. The first cohort of eight UniVol volunteers entered the field in February, 2007.

The UniVol programme has continued following its initial trial, placing students on ten-month volunteer assignments with overseas partner organisations in Southern Africa, South East Asia and the Pacific Islands. Figure 4.1 below illustrates the location of UniVols from 2007 to 2015. The pilot programme was deemed a success, as VSA considered that the programme did indeed complement VSA’s strategic intent. Supporting this success also was the fact that all the initial eight volunteers in 2007 had completed their assignments in full, and returned having had positive experiences. This went far beyond the expectations of VSA. Despite the general positivity of the pilot programme, however, an internal review conducted by VSA (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2008), identified key areas for improvement

if the programme was to remain sustainable. Issues surrounding when assignments were established, holding earlier recruitment meetings, selecting appropriate partner organisations that understood the function and purpose of UniVols, developing stronger support networks for younger volunteers, and addressing development education, were key issues presented (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2008). As the programme continued, VSA staff continued to make minor adjustments to their support structures, recruitment processes, and assignment roles, to strengthen the programme (KI 056).



**Figure 4.1: UniVol assignment locations from 2007-2015 (Source: Author's research)**

One further change that was implemented in 2010 was the agreement reached with VSA and Victoria University, in Wellington, New Zealand. This partnership enabled geography students from both Victoria and Otago universities to apply for UniVol positions, symbolising the popularity and recognition that the UniVol programme had gained after only a few years in operation. Interest in the UniVol programme has recently extended to another national university, the University of Auckland in 2015, which has developed a partnership with VSA to bring the number of universities incorporated into the programme to three. At the time of this research, discussions to incorporate Massey University into the programme were also taking place (KI 055, KI 056). From 2007 to 2015, VSA placed 78 UniVol volunteers on assignment in a wide range of areas, which have aimed to contribute towards VSA's main focus areas on civil society, economic and public sector development (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2).

**Table 4.1: Location of UniVol assignments, 2007-2015**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of Volunteers</b>
<b>Africa</b>	
Tanzania	4
South Africa	8
<b>Asia</b>	
Cambodia	4
<b>Pacific Islands</b>	
The Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB)	11
Papua New Guinea	9
Samoa	6
Solomon Islands	7
Timor-Leste	2
Tonga	9
Vanuatu	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>

**(Source: Author's research)****Table 4.2: Assignment roles of UniVols, 2007-2015**

<b>Type of Roles</b>	<b>Number of Volunteers</b>
Administration	13
Agriculture-based activities	1
Education-based activities	8
Environment-based activities	5
Monitoring and evaluation	6
Planning	2
Archiving	3
Social media/communications	6
Sports coaching	4
Statistics	2
Tourism-based activities	7
Youth work	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>

**(Source: Author's research)**

To become involved in the UniVol project, VSA delivers a presentation at each of the three universities in May each year, encouraging students who show interest to apply through their annual application process. Students are then selected after two interview stages in August and September, and are matched to the partner organisations where their skills are considered to be most appropriate. Selected students then spend a week in Wellington at VSA headquarters in November, being briefed on a variety of issues that prepares them for their ten-month assignments overseas (selection and briefing processes are discussed further in Chapter Six). Following this, successful applicants will generally be

placed on assignment at the beginning of the following year, having been ‘police-vetted’ and medically cleared. This progression is shown in Table 4.3 below, exemplified through the 2015 cohort;

**Table 4.3: The progression of UniVol applications for 2015**

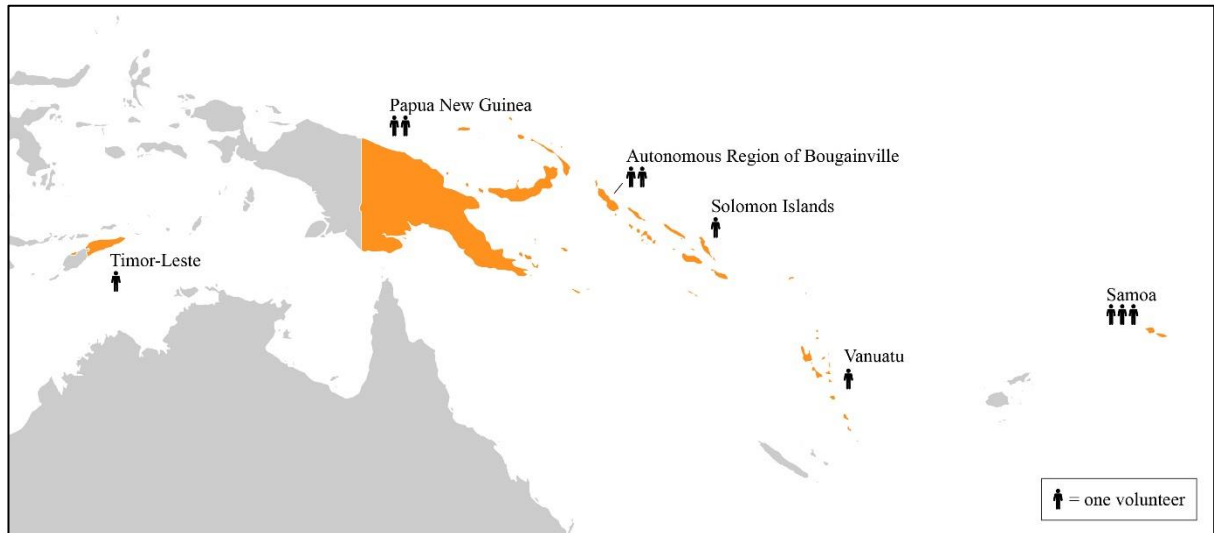
<b>Date</b>	<b>Process</b>
late May, 2014	VSA travels to respective universities to deliver UniVol presentations
early July, 2014	Candidate applications close
August, 2014	Shortlisted applicants are interviewed by telephone
September, 2014	Those that progress from telephone interviews are interviewed in-person at VSA offices
late November, 2014	Briefing course at VSA headquarters is conducted over four days for those selected
January/February, 2015	Volunteers depart to assignment
November/December, 2015	Volunteers return from assignment, commence debriefing

(Source: Volunteer Service Abroad, 2014)

#### **4.4 Hosting UniVol volunteers**

In reviewing the UniVol programme and the history of VSA as an organisation, it is now important to provide context on the countries where UniVol volunteers have worked. Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1 reveal the nine different developing nations where VSA has established UniVol assignments, alongside its larger regular volunteer programme. For many of these countries, a number of longstanding issues have significantly inhibited their current development. All nine countries were subject to colonial rule, creating a period where the transition to independence was lengthy, marginalising local people and limiting their rights. In some instances, nations such as PNG, Timor-Leste, Cambodia, South Africa and the Solomon Islands, have experienced protracted violence following colonial rule, as inappropriate colonial boundaries and social divisions have led to civil war and extreme racial and class-based oppression. Recent contestations for independence in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB) and Timor-Leste attest to such deep-seeded issues. Politically, colonial legacies have created situations where certain nations have struggled to establish stability and good governance. Coupled with increasing debt owed to Western institutions, and the inability to provide effective social services, a number of these selected nations rely heavily on overseas assistance. As mentioned previously, the volunteer programmes in Southern Africa and South East Asia were closed, following the New

Zealand National Government's alignment to a more Pacific-orientated development agenda. VSA, which is heavily dependent on government assistance, ultimately had no alternative but to realign itself to these principles. The last UniVol assignment in the non-Pacific regions was to Tanzania, in 2011.



**Figure 4.2: Location of UniVol assignments in 2015 (Source: Author's research)**

In the Pacific Islands, programmes in Vanuatu, the ARB, PNG and the Solomon Islands have been longstanding. UniVols were introduced in Timor-Leste in 2015, and in Tonga, UniVols were on assignment in 2013 and 2014. Figure 4.2 above shows the locations of UniVol assignments in the Pacific Islands in 2015. This chapter will now provide a more detailed contextual discussion of the four selected field sites where the majority of data for this research was collected. Host community perspectives, in particular, are gathered directly from participants in these specific regions. It is important to therefore understand the historical conditions that underpin such societies, and how they have led to the current social and political conditions (see Chapter Five for detail as to why these sites were chosen).

#### **4.4.1 Samoa**

Samoa is one of the main countries where VSA is currently sending its UniVol volunteers. Samoa has a varied history that is maligned by foreign rule and inquest, contributing to its status as a developing Pacific nation today. Settled by the first Pacific forebears around 5000BC, Samoa became a flourishing trading centre in the Pacific region, remaining unknown to the Western world until the dawn of the exploration era (Tavita, 2006). The Samoan islands were first 'discovered' by Dutch navigator Jacob Roggewin in 1722. This began a series of European explorer contacts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, culminating in European settlement and the arrival of missionaries (Tavita, 2006). As European and American

interests in Samoa continued to expand, growing calls for the annexation of the region by settlers were made. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was during a time when rapid colonialism was occurring globally by Western nations in their attempts to gain resources and cheap labour. Three major Western powers, Germany, the United States of America, and Great Britain, had established interests in the region. They each attempted to establish control in the region, by backing ruling claims made by indigenous royal families before the decade of formal partition began in the 1880s. In 1889, the three nations signed the Berlin Act, which agreed to tripartite supervision of Samoa. This Act was broken only a decade later, when German rule was imposed in 1900 following the One Day War (Tavita, 2006).



**Plate 4.1: A view of Apia, the capital city of Samoa, from across Apia Harbour, in 2015 (Source: Author's research)**

During this time, and into the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, local Samoans were excluded from local politics. German rule in Samoa was rescinded following the outbreak of World War I, when a New Zealand expeditionary force assumed control of the islands in 1914 (Tavita, 2006). This moment was to mark the beginning of New Zealand administration in Samoa, which was to last until independence in 1962. For local Samoans, extensive marginalisation continued throughout this time period, as New Zealand administrators restricted local political movements and exhibited inept decision making. Field (2006: 15) describes this period for local Samoans as ‘confusing’, “being run by people who had only a vague idea of their identity and place.” The administration era was marked by two major incidents that produced lasting impact upon the local Samoan community. The arrival of the

New Zealand ship, the SS Talune, in 1918 brought with it an influenza epidemic that resulted in the death of 22% of the Samoan population, approximately 8500 individuals. The ship was inadvertently cleared to dock in Apia Harbour (shown in Plate 4.1 above) by New Zealand officials, despite it having been blocked previously in Suva, Fiji, due to quarantine-related concerns, creating a catastrophic impact on local livelihoods. Secondly, the ‘Black Saturday’ incident in 1929 was also to prove fateful for Samoans, when the local nationalist Mau movement leader and royal family member Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III was murdered at the hands of New Zealand authorities during demonstrations for self-rule (Fields, 2006). The subsequent exiling of local Mau movement members to New Zealand prisons, and the reluctance of New Zealand to concede to self-government, further subjugated Samoa during the reign of the administration, creating long-lasting issues that have hindered its development.

Today, independent Samoa faces a number of issues related to sea level rise and other climate change challenges. The nation is supported by aid programmes from neighbouring nations like Australia and New Zealand, and from other countries. New Zealand’s aid programme to Samoa was officially established in 1960 (Tavita, 2006), and continues today in a variety of different forms, one of which is through volunteers.

#### **4.4.2 Vanuatu**

The Melanesian archipelago of Vanuatu is another nation that is incorporated within the volunteering outreach of VSA. Consisting of around 80 islands that are separated by vast distances, Vanuatu’s history is also heavily influenced by colonial rule, which has contributed to the current issues it faces as a developing Pacific Island nation. Port Vila, the capital city of Vanuatu, is shown below in Plate 4.2. Although settled thousands of years before European arrival, Miles (1998) states that little is known about the pre-contact history of the Vanuatu Islands. European ‘discovery’ in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, first by Spanish explorer Fernandez de Quiros who sighted the largest island, Espiritu Santo, in 1606, and then further in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by French explorer Louis Antoine de Bougainville and British explorer James Cook, established contact that eventually led to the arrival of European settlers (Dickie, 1981; Cheer *et al*, 2013). James Cook named the archipelago the New Hebrides in 1774.

Settlers came to the region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the form of planters, farmers, traders and missionaries. As economic interests in the region grew, alongside Western ambitions to ‘covet overseas territories’, so did the aspiration for colonisation (Miles, 1998).



The French had already established a penal colony in neighbouring New Caledonia, and wanted to support their established plantations further. The British, although less willing to become politically involved to support their companies and settlers, were pressured to intervene in the New Hebrides by its Australian colonies. Australians were wary of French expansion in the region and were interested in securing cheap labour sources for their own plantations (Miles, 1998; Douglas, 1996). As a result, the two nations came to an agreement to rule as a joint Anglo-French Condominium of the New Hebrides in 1906, formalised in 1914, in what is described by Aldrich (1993) as one of the ‘oddest’ arrangements in the colonial Pacific Islands.



**Plate 4.2: Downtown Port Vila, the capital city of Vanuatu, in 2015 (Source: Author’s research)**

Miles (1998) states that New Hebrides was the only nation that experienced the ‘tug’ of competing hegemonies during its colonial era, a situation which adversely impacted upon its indigenous population. Administration was duplicated by both colonisers, each having individual police forces, judicial systems, medical services and schooling, whilst enforcing dual currencies, dual flags and two official languages (Douglas, 1996). For indigenous locals it became a ‘doubly oppressed’ colony, where they could not claim the citizenship of either power and were left ‘practically stateless’, adhering to their traditional *kastom* lifestyles with limited political freedoms (Aldrich, 1993; Miles, 1998). During the period before World War II, colonial operations in the New Hebrides remained relatively limited in comparison with



other colonies. As war broke out in 1939, however, the nation became host to several hundred thousand American soldiers from 1942 to 1945, dramatically transforming hitherto little developed islands like Espiritu Santo into large infrastructural bases (Aldrich, 1993) (see Plate 4.3). Many local men were recruited to help with the war effort at the time (Rodman, 2006). Miles (1998: 19) argues that the post-war evacuation of American troops from 1945 to 1947 left behind two important legacies for indigenous locals, “a taste for material goods and a flirtation with freedom”. Britain had begun to pull out of its overseas territories following the war, which coincided with local grassroots nationalist movements that were centred on the importance of local *kastom*, opposing colonial rule (Aldrich, 1993; Miles, 1998). Although French powers were less reluctant to withdraw, increased local pressure and discussions with Britain led to the disbandment of the Condominium, and independence for the newly renamed Vanuatu in 1980 (Douglas, 1996; Cheer *et al*, 2013).



**Plate 4.3: American WWII machinery dumped off Million Dollar Point, in Luganville, Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu (Source: Author’s research)**

The legacies of Condominium rule placed a heavy burden upon the newly established Vanuatu. Colonialism had marginalised locals and ensured most industry, infrastructure, and the political landscape were controlled by colonialists. Rebuilding a national identity and forming a cohesive and functioning government brought a monumental challenge for local ni-Van, due to their political inexperience. This is a process that requires time and external assistance. Other culminating impacts connected to development, such as issues relating to climate, sea level rise and natural disasters, have made aid relief and the involvement of

NGO's increasingly important. Volunteering is an important aspect of this, and is one way that New Zealand contributes towards Vanuatu in an effort to help its future growth and development.

#### **4.4.3 Papua New Guinea**

VSA's volunteering programmes have longstanding connections with PNG, a developing Melanesian state in the Pacific that has had a turbulent history following Western influence. PNG is a nation rich in culture and history, with human settlement in the region tracing back over 50,000 years (Griffin *et al*, 1979) (see Plate 4.4). It has the largest population of all Pacific nations, at approximately 7.6 million (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). The region is home to a large number of diverse tribal groups, from small coastal settlements to isolated inland villages. Sinclair (1985) reveals that there may have been as many as 1,000 local languages spoken in the PNG region, many of which still exist today. In certain cases, languages are only spoken by a handful of people. Many communities before pre-European contact remained relatively isolated from other global regions, with Waiko (1993) arguing that little evidence exists of contact between PNG and areas in south-east Asia before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. European arrival in the 16<sup>th</sup> century marked a slow shift in traditional tribal livelihoods for many coastal areas, when Portuguese explorer Jorge de Meneses discovered the west coast of the main island in 1526, naming it 'Ilhas dos Papuas', Islands of the Papuans (Waiko, 1993). European interest in the area grew through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the point where the region was partitioned and colonised by Britain, Germany and Holland in 1884. Most local Papuans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century still remained relatively unaffected, as the majority of villages were 'untouched by foreign ways' (Griffin *et al*, 1979). Sinclair (1985: 72) argues, however, that the impact of colonisation, which was 'artificial and irrational', was to become severe as time progressed, "creating political problems that now bedevil the independent nation of PNG".

In 1884, the north-east section of New Guinea was declared a German protectorate, the south-east section a British protectorate under the administration of Australia, and the western half of the mainland (now West Papua) annexed by Holland as part of their Indonesian colony. This partition was undertaken without the consultation or consideration of local indigenous Papuans (Waiko, 1993). Resources, such as copra, coconut, rubber, gold, and labour were of particular interest to European colonisers, as settlers came and established plantations and businesses in more coastal areas, while the majority of inland PNG remained untouched. In 1906, Australia formally took over the British protectorate and

renamed the territory Papua, gaining control of the German New Guinea protectorate following the outbreak of World War I (Sinclair, 1985; Waiko, 1993). Australia's mandate in the region lasted until the outbreak of World War II. By 1940, two-thirds of the population in the combined regions were still only loosely governed by irregular government patrols, the majority of the country remaining largely underdeveloped (Griffin *et al*, 1979).



**Plate 4.4: Forms of traditional dress worn at a graduation ceremony in Kairak Vudal, East New Britain Province, PNG (Source: Author's research)**

World War II impacted on both Papua and New Guinea heavily, as the Japanese drove out Australian forces in 1942 and sent over 300,000 troops to the region (Griffin *et al*, 1979). The ensuing battles for Allied reclamation of the territory impacted on many local people living on islands and in coastal areas, affecting their livelihoods through bombings, ground fighting and forced labour (Sinclair, 1985) (see Plate 4.5). Following World War II, Australia once again enforced trusteeship in the region under the Charter of the United Nations, and ruled Papua and New Guinea jointly as Papua New Guinea from 1949 (Waiko, 1993; Griffin *et al*, 1997). The Australian government assumed further control of the region and benefitted from the emerging natural resource extraction industry. Pressure to grant independence came internationally in the 1960s, a time when colonies around the world were shifting to independence. Over a prolonged period, Australian intervention in PNG eventually declined, when self-government came to PNG in 1973 and independence was



made official in 1975 (Johnson, 1983). Lasting colonial legacies, such as a lack of political involvement among locals and marginalisation, have created significant barriers to development in the newly independent state of PNG. Combined with other internal and external issues, PNG remains in the ‘low human development’ category in the Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). Various forms of aid, including volunteering, are delivered by a number of nations and international organisations to assist PNG’s development today.



**Plate 4.5: The remains of wartime Japanese boats found inside inland tunnels, which were dug by forced local and POW labourers during WWII, in Rabaul, East New Britain Province, PNG (Source: Author’s research)**

#### **4.4.4 Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB), Papua New Guinea**

The ARB, whilst still formally a part of PNG, has experienced historical events that have significantly restricted its development. It currently relies heavily on overseas aid to rebuild government infrastructure, based in Buka (see Plate 4.6), in its bid to gain independence. Possessing distinct cultural differences to PNG, Dinnen and Peake (2013) state that the ARB has been governed by a number of outside powers since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, most recently being its incorporation into the independent nation of PNG in 1975. They argue that local Bougainvillians consider this latest political arrangement as “every bit as foreign as their European predecessors” Dinnen and Peake (2013: 573). Wilson-Roberts (2001) points out that ARB has been populated for approximately 30,000 years. The first European explorer to

make contact with the islands was Louis Antoine de Bougainville in 1768, and there was further European contact throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century by four main groups; whalers, traders, labour recruiters and other explorers (Oliver, 1973). Bougainville was to remain a region outside of the European administrative domain until 1884, when Germany annexed north-east New Guinea, eventually adding Bougainville to its colony in 1899. German interest in the Bougainville islands were mainly for their value as a strategic Pacific outpost and as a source of raw materials, the production of copra, and the subsequent establishment of numerous large plantations (Oliver, 1973). For local Bougainvillians, the establishment of large colonial plantations alienated indigenous land ownership claims and negated traditional *kastom* values, which often led to violence. Although German territorial claims were rescinded following the outbreak of World War I, their policies and practices remained ‘more or less in force’ throughout Australian trusteeship of the Papua and New Guinea territories until World War II. However, the continual marginalisation of indigenous peoples remained (Oliver, 1973).



**Plate 4.6: Downtown Buka, currently the main administrative centre of the ARB, in 2015 (Source: Author’s research)**

World War II and the Japanese occupation of Bougainville had major long-lasting impacts, which saw the islands initially attacked by the Japanese after their occupation of Rabaul, then again as Allied forces fought to reclaim Papua and New Guinea. Local Bougainvillians were painfully involved in the war, as fighting, and forced labour significantly impacted on local livelihoods for many years (Oliver, 1973). Following the war and the Australian administrative unification of Papua and New Guinea, the islands were to

experience further exploitation, this time in the form of mineral extraction (Oliver, 1973). Resource extraction was becoming globally popular following new post-war technologies, changing ARB's history dramatically in the 1960s. In the 1960s, the Australian administration made the decision, despite fervent local opposition, to open a large copper mine in Panguna (Plate 4.7), the largest industrial enterprise in the Pacific at the time (Dinnen and Peake, 2013). This followed what had already been a turbulent time for local people, who were recovering from the impacts of the war. Wilson-Roberts (2001) argues that the exploration phases and lease arrangements that were agreed upon, were considered unfair by local Bougainvillians. Dissatisfaction and hostility towards the mine grew, incited by the ignorance of mining company personnel. Issues with the expansion of the mine and the amount of land that was taken by the supporting infrastructure, in conjunction with the lack of adequate consultation and understanding of local culture, *kastom*, and land ownership in the region, led to sporadic violence (Oliver, 1973). This was to become a major catalyst for the civil war in 1989.



**Plate 4.7: The Panguna Mine, Bougainville Island, ARB (Source: Radio New Zealand, 2017)**

Secessionist discussions in Bougainville were becoming popular throughout the 1960s, which eventually led to the establishment of a provisional government in 1974 (Wilson-Roberts, 2001; Dinnen and Peake, 2013). Following the independence of PNG in 1975, the newly installed government looked to maintain such arrangements for Bougainville. However, further grievances over surrounding mine land led to a souring



relationship and xenophobic feelings between Bougainvillians and Papua New Guineans, thus enhancing violence. In 1989, the mine was officially closed following acts of sabotage. The PNG Defence Force became involved in Bougainville, and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army was formed in response to this, leading to a protracted and bloody conflict as Bougainville declared independence in 1990 (Wilson-Roberts, 2001; Dinnen and Peake, 2013). Blockades and sanctions imposed by PNG, as well as the escalating violence, forced many Bougainvillians to turn to subsistence living, “thrown entirely back on their own resources” (Dinnen and Peake, 2013; 574). The conflict was to last until 1998, following failed ceasefires and further violent military clashes throughout the 1990s. The Lincoln Agreement on Peace, Security and Development on Bougainville was agreed to in 1998. This dictated a phased withdrawal of PNG forces from the ARB, and ongoing reconciliation and discussions, with the proviso that the ARB could possibly become independent in the future if local government was adequately prepared (Wilson-Roberts, 2001).



**Plate 4.8: Local children swim around a dilapidated wharf structure in Buka Strait, ARB (Source: Author’s research)**

The people of the ARB have faced many challenges throughout their history. Such challenges, combined with ongoing attempts to establish independence, have created poverty in the region and created a demand for aid and support to assist the autonomous region (see Plate 4.8). Neighbouring nations, particularly New Zealand and Australia, who were integral in the peace brokering process, now play a significant role in supporting ARB post-conflict.

Assistance is needed to support the government in preparation for the referendum on its future independence bid from PNG, alongside support for those communities that have been deeply affected by conflict. One of these forms of aid is through volunteering, which plays a significant role in working with individuals and communities to help achieve such aims. At the time of this research, the ARB is still a part of PNG. Throughout the research, however, a distinction has been made between the two. This is owed to the fact that historical experiences, combined with the current political, environmental, and cultural differences, make the experience for volunteers distinctively different in the two respective areas. Observation during the field-based research, and talking to individuals in the field, have reinforced this difference. There is value, therefore, in talking of the unique settings individually.

## **4.5 Conclusion**

Volunteering can play an important role in the overall development of poorer and previously marginalised populations. VSA volunteers work in a number of countries that have significant colonial legacies, countries that now face challenges in their attempts to move forward and develop. There has been little research, however, around the impacts and outcomes from the work that VSA volunteers do in host countries, specifically that of its younger UniVol volunteers. Following the review of the pilot programme in 2008 (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2008), VSA has not specifically reviewed the UniVol programme. Whilst the UniVol programme is discussed briefly in certain VSA reports, in marketing brochures, and on its website (see Volunteer Service Abroad, 2012; 2014; 2015a; 2015b), there is limited information that reflects on the entire programme's history, with details lacking on the collective work that UniVol volunteers have achieved over the years. VSA's promotional material presented to prospective volunteers (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2014; Volunteer Service Abroad, 2015a; 2017), mainly presents information for prospective volunteers. Information that can provide a more generalised and conclusive evaluation of the impacts and experiences that UniVols have had since the inception of the programme, is lacking. This thesis is timely, therefore, in exploring the UniVol programme through a framework that seeks to examine the roles of younger volunteers in IDV. This chapter has provided contextual detail on VSA as an organisation over time, to show how its programmes, most specifically its UniVol programme, fit within the current global context of international development volunteering. A detailed discussion of the regions where



UniVols volunteer, discussed in detail specifically in relation to the fieldwork conducted in this research project, provides context surrounding the importance of volunteer assistance.

The UniVol programme has been regarded as particularly successful, working with partner organisations in a manner that upholds VSA's strategic intent around building local partnerships and capacity development within developing communities. Yet substantial research to reinforce such claims is limited. This chapter has set the platform for understanding the basic functions of the programme and where it operates, allowing this thesis to progress in the following chapters to explain next the methodological framework and then the detailed results gathered through field-based research.

# Chapter Five

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## **Methodology and research strategy**

## **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapters have developed a number of key research questions, identified through a review of current literature around IDV, the impact of younger people within this field, and the impact of the relationships developed between younger volunteers and host communities. These research questions will look to address such ‘gaps’ in the literature, to further understand the role and positions that younger people hold within the field of IDV. In order to address such questions, a clear methodological approach was devised to ensure that the data collection process adopted the most appropriate methods. This chapter provides a detailed discussion around the research strategy that was used in this research project. Initially, this chapter will discuss the evolution of methodological enquiry, before embarking on a detailed discussion of the methods used to collect data. Humanist methodological approaches were implemented to strengthen the data quality, as well as assist in creating a more reflective, ethical piece of research. Discussion will then shift toward the qualitative techniques that were utilised in the data collection process, and the sampling methods that were used to incorporate participants into the research. Finally, a discussion on issues relating to positionality, critical reflexivity, and ethical principles of research will follow. Concepts considering the researcher’s position within the research project, the influence of the researcher on the type of data collected, the dynamics of conducting research in developing countries, and the ethical principles applied to mitigate issues surrounding intellectual property and informant protection will be discussed. Various methodological techniques were adopted to ensure that valuable data was ethically obtained from participants to address the research aims and answer the research questions.

## **5.2 Humanist Epistemology**

Geographical methods of research enquiry have experienced considerable change over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, bringing into the new millennium various epistemological and ontological theories that shape how research is conducted and represented in published literature. Geographical research until the 1950s was largely empirical in nature, exploring patterns and processes within specific locations to understand phenomena (Kitchin, 2006). Studies were predominantly concerned about understanding the world by observing what was happening and the way it was structured. In development research, for example, this included reflecting on historical information about how countries and regions had progressed through time (Desai and Potter, 2006). Concerns arose, however, over the inability of empirical data to distinguish between casual correlations and accidental

associations, leading to the rise of the quantitative revolution (Kitchin, 2006). Many geographers began applying scientific methods to social science research in order to establish universal laws that explained and predicted spatial patterns and processes (Kitchin, 2006). Such research became known as ‘positivism’, which was influential in geographical-based research throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

The rise of ‘alternate geographies’ in the 1970s and 1980s, however, brought in a new era of methodological enquiry that challenged positivist geographical methods. Alternative ideologies, such as structuralism, humanism, realism, feminism and ethnography grew from this era, and were valued for their ability to unearth complex social issues. This led to the expansion of qualitative methods throughout the social sciences (Taylor and Bogdan, 2011). Research in development studies became considerably more inductive and participatory through the use of these discourses, focusing on how people think and act in everyday life (Taylor and Bogdan, 2011). Developing contextual understandings through data analysis became valued throughout research production, as opposed to previous positivist thinking that aimed to assess data within preconceived models and hypotheses (Taylor and Bogdan, 2011). Today, researchers and academics in the development field conduct studies that utilise either singular epistemologies to explore phenomena and promote certain theories, or pluralistic techniques.

Pluralist techniques incorporate numerous epistemologies which are considered best suited to extract and assess the data that is most appropriate to the research topic. Such thinking has challenged the common dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative and quantitative techniques are now often considered as a ‘continuum’, where mixed methods and methodological triangulation draw upon numerous epistemological and methodological approaches to provide ‘pluralism’ and ‘eclecticism’ (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2011). Within development in particular, Desai and Potter (2006) note that research today is characterised by a ‘multiplicity’ of philosophical approaches, epistemologies, theories and models, many of which have been created, modified and reimagined over time to explore current issues. They, along with others, argue that the meta-theories and singular approaches that dominated early development research are now too narrow and limited (Winchester, 2000; Desai and Potter, 2006). Multiple conceptualisations and approaches are considered to be best suited in addressing layered and complex research topics, allowing research studies to be thorough in their examination of the project or

phenomenon under investigation (Winchester, 2000; Desai and Potter, 2006; Phillips and Johns, 2012; Creswell, 2011).

Through a subsequent literature review, it became apparent that a combination of methodological philosophies and discourses would prove suitable in gaining a wide range of data to address the multifaceted research questions. This would assist understanding on the contributions of younger UniVol volunteers and their relationships with host communities and partner organisations. The use of ‘methodological triangulation’, offers a way to harness such layered approaches, where more than one method for gathering data is incorporated into the project to find connections in the data (Phillips and Johns, 2012). Theories around methodological triangulation can be linked with components of mixed methods research, which combines the use of qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide breadth and depth on the understanding and corroboration of the phenomenon under research (Johnson *et al* 2007; cited in Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2011). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011: 287) argue that the most fundamental aspect of mixed methods research is its ability to provide variety, “choosing what we believe to be the best tools for answering our questions”. Whilst this research will favour the use of qualitative-based research methods, quantitative methods, in the form of statistical representation (graphs and tables), will prove useful in revealing broader trends and numerical based information. Applying mixed methods and triangulation techniques enables the project to take on a ‘dialectic stance’, acknowledging that multiple quantitative and qualitative methods have something to offer during the collection and representation of data (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2011).

Mixed approaches to research, at a theoretical level, can employ a myriad of epistemologies, each contributing to the way that knowledge is understood, collected and represented. In this research, humanist epistemology, alongside elements of feminist methodological approaches, are embedded within the employed research methods and ethical considerations. The concept of humanism in geographical research became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, as researchers looked to form more realistic conceptualisations of humans and their behaviours as ‘geographical agents’ (Golledge and Stimson, 1987; Entrikin and Tepple, 2006). Moving away from statistical-based research, humanism focused on the importance of the human experience, analysing subjective experiences of people and place, ideas around emotion and feeling, and individual involvement and participation (Rodaway, 2006). The idea that places are socially produced through cooperative actions of individuals, as opposed to the intersections of social processes, drives human-centric research (Entrikin

and Tepple, 2006). Within development studies, humanism was used to promote the involvement of minority groups, conducting research around lifestyles, cultures, and living conditions (Desai and Potter, 2006). This form of research was more inductive in nature, moving away from the notion of linking research to predetermined ideas and hypotheses.

Entrikin and Tepple (2006: 36) argue that humanism is best represented through the geographies of care and moral geographies, which stress research on the “autonomous intentional agent and humans as the creators and interpreters of meaning”. Aspects of humanist research epistemologies add a significant dimension to the research project, as they provide a space for the opinion of stakeholders to be expressed. When exploring a topic that is concerned with the impacts that volunteers have socially, how they build relationships to establish capacity building with partner organisations and community members, it is critical to reflect on the thoughts of individuals and how they interpret their experience. Some of the important research methods popularised by humanist geographers to explore human-centric attitudes and beliefs, such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing and critical reflection, have been adapted and utilised in the data collection process (discussed later in this chapter) (Rodaway, 2006). Exploring individual relationships and opinions make it important, therefore, to consider the social construction and interpretation of this from the individual’s perspective.

Elements of Feminist discourse also contribute to the overall research strategy of this thesis, as they challenge traditional power relations and structures to give voice to the often oppressed ‘other’ (England, 1994). Established in the 1970s, feminist thinking is argued to deconstruct what is ‘taken for granted’ (England, 2006), recognising that “universalism, compartmentalisation, and objectivity have traditionally been associated with male faculties of sense and reason, whilst their oppositions – particularism, relationality, and subjectivity – have been constituted as the domain of unreasoning, female faculties driven by mere sensibility” (Dixon and Jones, 2006: 45). Concepts related to power, privilege, oppression and representation are critiqued through a feminist lens, often in relation to gender issues (England, 2006). Whilst gender lies at the heart of feminist research, the field has also expanded to incorporate marginalised racial and social groups, disabled peoples, and issues related to sexuality. In a broader sense, feminism challenges traditional dichotomies, such as the object and subject, rational versus irrational, and male versus female, to redefine assumptions and methods and create new forms of knowledge (England, 2006).

In relation to this research, only minor elements of feminist discourse are engaged with, when issues of marginalisation and empowerment among host communities are apparent. The opinions of host communities and partner organisations is limited in current published research around IDV (see Chapter Three). Feminist thinking encourages researchers to incorporate and represent the feelings of marginalised stakeholders, giving them an equal voice and opportunity to participate. The role of the researcher is also considered. Methodologically, feminist epistemologies have challenged the power relations between the researcher and the researched. Notions of the researcher being the ‘expert’, the researched being ‘passive’ in the research process, and the researcher attempting to remain detached and objective, are challenged through notions of critical reflexivity, subjectivity, and mutuality (England, 1994; Hurd, 1998). This thinking has shaped how this research is conducted, reflected upon, and subsequently presented (discussed later in this chapter). Combined with humanist ideals, this mixed framework offers the opportunity to explore the impacts that volunteers make whilst on assignment from different perspectives, providing a unique characteristic to the collected data and the presentation of the research findings.

### **5.3 Field-based research strategy**

Successful field research demands an appropriate strategy to guide the research process. The conclusions and subsequent research questions that were developed through the literature review process, identified the potential to develop a research topic that could address gaps within current research. In order to carry out such research, the need to collect data in the field was recognised. Following discussions with academic supervisors around the broader premise of the research topic, VSA’s UniVol project was deemed to be a potentially promising programme that could shed light on the impact that younger people have within the IDV context. Steps were then made to establish contact with VSA and gain permission to explore the UniVol project as a case study within the wider research objectives. After reaching an agreement to use the UniVol programme as a case study, discussions on undertaking field-based research to build a strong collection of data ensued. The following discussion illustrates the various steps that were taken to conduct field-based research and collect data.

#### **5.3.1 Fieldwork logistics and the selection of such sites**

Four week-long field-based research trips to VSA’s headquarters in Wellington, New Zealand, were organised in June, 2014, December, 2014, February, 2015, and July, 2015. Initially, the first trip discussed the premise of the research project in detail and the relevance

of the UniVol programme in relation to the proposed project. Potential data sources were also discussed, as well as broader logistics in relation to conducting fieldwork in overseas locations. In December, 2015, research was conducted by means of participant observation, becoming involved in the volunteer briefing process for the 2015 cohort of UniVol volunteers, and witnessing the pre-departure training offered to VSA volunteers before entering the field as volunteers. In February, 2015, secondary data stored at VSA's headquarters was examined. Returned UniVol volunteers' experiences and assignment descriptions, as noted in their post-assignment briefings, was collected. Finally, the final research trip in July, 2015, was initiated in order to interview VSA staff, as well as to follow up discussions around overseas research trips to communities where UniVol volunteers were actively engaged. Fieldwork logistics were prepared and organised in conjunction with VSA staff, to establish an appropriate international fieldwork window to meet with UniVol volunteers and partner organisations in their respective countries.

As a result of the discussions surrounding fieldwork options, three overseas trips were planned to four destinations. Field sites in Samoa, Vanuatu, PNG, and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB) were chosen, as they were places that had hosted the majority of UniVol volunteers throughout the programme's history (see Figure 4.1, in Chapter Four). In relation to the 2015 cohort of UniVol volunteers, the four chosen destinations were hosts to 8 out of the ten volunteers for that year (see Figure 4.2, in Chapter Four). The selected field sites were also home to a high number of current and former partner organisations, owing to the volume of UniVol assignments that had been delivered across these regions. Such reasons led to fieldwork being conducted across these sites, as certain factors (expressed in Chapter Ten) limited the possibility of visiting each individual host country.

The research trips were planned in the latter half of 2015, the first one to Samoa from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, then to Vanuatu from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, and finally to Papua New Guinea and the ARB from the 24<sup>th</sup> of October to the 11<sup>th</sup> of November. Each of the three research trips were conducted over a two to three week period, to collect primary data from local informants, VSA volunteers and staff members. The overseas fieldwork offered a valuable opportunity to gain first-hand understanding of the impacts that UniVol volunteers were having on their respective assignments, as well as on the wider community and the partner organisations they were living and working alongside. Of significant importance was the possibility to examine the perspectives of local staff and



community members. During the research trips, a variety of qualitative data collection methods were utilised to collect a substantial body of primary and secondary data.

### **5.3.2 Informants**

A total of 100 informants were involved through the variety of mixed methods that were utilised during the fieldwork process (see Appendix 7). These informants were selected through different sampling methods (discussed later in this chapter) and have each contributed significantly to the formation of this thesis. Table 5.1 quantifies this data below. Borovnik *et al* (2014) suggest that establishing a large network of contacts can make research projects interesting and successful. In this instance, all 100 informants have ensured that the research has a depth of collected data to draw upon. In some research, certain informants can also be identified as being ‘Key Informants’, or ‘Gatekeepers’. They can be considered more valuable than others, in their ability to provide access to other groups who fit into the focus of the research, or give the researcher a certain “seal of approval” (Wesche *et al*, 2010: 65), when working in host communities (see Higginbottom, 2004; Banks and Scheyvens, 2014). Although certain informants did fulfil such criteria, there is the potential to understate the contributions of other informants when elevating the contributions of select individuals. This research has therefore referred to all participants equally as ‘Key Informants’. When reviewing the 100 informants involved, however, it is possible to identify certain groups in civil society with which they can be associated.

**Table 5.1: Sources of data collected in the field**

<b>Type of data</b>	<b>Type of KIs</b>	<b>Number of KIs</b>
Interviews	Current and former VSA staff, UniVols, other VSA volunteers, host community members, host partner organisations, VSA board members	90
Focus Groups	VSA UniVols, host partner organisations, host community members	10
Observation	2015 UniVols, host community members, host partner organisations, in-country VSA staff	Approximately 30

**(Source: Author’s research)**

1. Current and former UniVol volunteers

One of the key groups identified in the study population were the UniVol volunteers. Out of the 100 informants involved in the research process, 54 were UniVols. Including the 2015 UniVol cohort, there had been 78 UniVols assignments delivered since its first year in 2007. Out of the 10 UniVols in the field in 2015, 8 were participants, and of the 68 former UniVols, 46 were participants. This equated to a significant 69% sample size of all UniVol volunteers since the programme's establishment in 2007 to the time of the research in 2015. These informants were essential in explaining the various roles that had been undertaken by UniVol volunteers since the programme's establishment. They provided an in-depth understanding of their experiences in the field with their partner organisations, with VSA as a volunteer organisation, and the positive and negative aspects of volunteering in various communities around the world. Early UniVol cohorts who volunteered in countries within Southern Africa and South East Asia were also able to share their experiences about programmes that are no longer functional, owing to VSA's shift in focus toward the Pacific region. The data collected from all 54 UniVol informants was essential in ensuring that all of the proposed research questions could be addressed.

## 2. Current and former VSA staff members

Another important group of informants were the past and present employees of VSA. From the 100 informants, a total of 15 informants had been, or were currently, working for VSA. Some were directly linked with the UniVol programme itself. This included programme managers and programme officers from a range of countries where VSA is running volunteer projects, as well as staff who were based at VSA headquarters in Wellington. Those participants were involved in logistical, managerial and recruitment activities that support UniVols before departure, during assignment, and on their return. One participant was residing on VSA's council at the time of interview. Certain staff members had been involved in the UniVol project right from its inception, and were able to provide detailed information on the chronology and functionality of the programme, on numerous UniVol volunteers and their experiences, as well as their experiences with current and former partner organisations that have worked alongside VSA in hosting UniVol volunteers. Current and former staff who had worked in the field as programme managers and officers were also able to add their knowledge on the impact that UniVols had made with host communities and partner organisations, as well as identifying the benefits and implications of organising younger volunteers in the field, in comparison to the regular VSA volunteer programme. Such information was again crucial in addressing all of the research questions posed in this

research, providing useful insight that combines effectively with the data supplied by the UniVols themselves.

### 3. Partner organisations working in conjunction with VSA

During the fieldwork process, a total of 30 informants from both current and previous partner organisations, who had hosted UniVols, were incorporated within the study population. Partner organisations ranged from civil society stakeholders, such as religious affiliations, NGO's, youth centres and education institutions, to public sector stakeholders from local and central government branches in their respective countries. All participants provided information that boosted the overall quality of the collected data, providing the host perspective on a range of issues. Information about the impacts upon host communities from both regular and UniVol volunteers, the nature of working with VSA as a volunteer sending organisation, and the general aims that each partner organisation had within their local settings, gave understanding on the overall implications of sending younger volunteers into the field, and the nature of the volunteer-host relationship. This information was also crucial in balancing the perspectives from the volunteers and VSA staff, to ensure that representation from local host communities was included within the research project. The perspectives of hosts with IDV are limited within published literature. Understanding how hosts perceive their experiences was essential in attempting to address this knowledge gap.

### 4. Regular VSA volunteers

Finally, the last distinctive group of informants that can be identified from the collected data are VSA's regular volunteers, who live alongside and, in some cases, work alongside UniVol volunteers on assignment. Four informants were incorporated into the study population during the field-based research process, some of whom had been on numerous VSA placements. Whilst a smaller element to the collected data, the current and former volunteers were nevertheless able to provide information on how they had experienced working and living in communities with a number of UniVol volunteers, as well as the development of in-country programmes run by VSA during their time overseas. This information provided another different perspective on the impact that younger volunteers have with host communities and the overall effectiveness of VSA itself.

### **5.2.3 Grey literature**

Throughout the fieldwork process, reports, brochures, pamphlets and files containing information on volunteer assignments were examined, adding to the depth of the collected

data. Such material is collectively referred to as ‘grey literature’, as it is detached from commercial publishing (Auger, 1998; cited in Bellefontaine and Lee, 2014). Grey literature was discovered in the initial literature search process, accessed through detailed internet searches. Other material was acquired through contact with informants during the field-based research. Informants were able to suggest or supply literature that they considered as being relevant to the overall research objectives, which was then incorporated into the results and literature review chapters. Material, such as information brochures on partner organisations, assignment reports, and other VSA-related material stored at their headquarters, as well as details of the specific in-country work in place by the various VSA country programmes, provided further understanding on the work that UniVol volunteers had made contributions towards.

Forms of grey literature have been critiqued because of issues relating to accessibility, ‘quality control’, and whether the material is inherently misleading and biased because of the possible deficiency of a peer review process (Roth, 2010). Bellefontaine and Lee (2014) suggest that there can indeed be considerable variability in the quality of grey literature, depending on its source. The majority of grey literature collected through the initial literature review and subsequent fieldwork processes, however, proved to be of use. Information on partner organisations, the impact that UniVol volunteers had made upon host communities, and the context surrounding the UniVol programme in general, was collected and included within the secondary data.

## **5.4 Research methods**

Research methods are described by Murray and Overton (2003: 17) as, “sets of techniques for interpreting the world”. This research has utilised a mix of methodological techniques, in the form of interviews, focus groups, and observation, to collect data in order to address the research questions.

### **5.4.1 Interviews**

The use of semi-structured interview techniques dominated all forms of data collection throughout the research process. Interviewing is a “process of finding, contacting, and meeting with research participants with the purpose of asking questions about their experiences and knowledge, and then listening – in open and non-judgemental ways – to what they say” (Phillips and Johns, 2012: 145). Interviews consequently present a conversational and fluid form, differing from one participant to the next according to their

views and opinions on the subject matter (Valentine, 2005). The varying nature of interviews, therefore, showcases their value in research methods. Because individuals experience phenomena differently, interviews can provide a platform that allows participants to voice their own experiences, which otherwise may be unheard or excluded (Winchester, 2000).

Interviews take three varying forms, namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Semi-structured interviews were utilised for the purpose of this research, administered to 71 informants that were between 10 to 80 minutes in length. The majority of interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner in person, carried out in Dunedin and Wellington with a number of returned UniVols and current VSA staff at their headquarters. In the four different field locations, interviews were conducted with UniVols who were on assignment at the time, with VSA staff, partner organisations, local community members and regular volunteers. In order to incorporate former UniVols and former VSA staff members, 14 interviews were also conducted through the use of online technologies, and a further interview via telephone. Mawdsley (2006) argues that the web can be a great medium for research today, and provides access to populations that are otherwise inaccessible. Informants were based all around New Zealand, the Pacific Islands and in Australia, and were otherwise unable to participate without the use of such technologies.

Semi-structured interviews incorporate the benefits of structured and unstructured interview methods, providing a platform that has “some degree of predetermined order, but still ensures flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the informant” (Dunn, 2000: 52). Interviews utilised an ‘unstandardised’ form that allowed participants to address questions in the way they saw fit (Sarantakos, 1998). Interviews followed a pre-set interview guide that was flexible in the way questions were delivered, according to the direction that the interview was taking. This major strength of semi-structured interviews ensured that there was potential for interviewees to develop their responses in-depth and present their own opinions and ideas, adding to the depth of the data (Dunn, 2000; Willis, 2006). Willis (2006) argues that the main issues associated with interview data revolve around accuracy and representation of the target population, stating that researchers need to consider how representative informants are of the wider group. In certain instances, interviews can also fail to capture data that is not easily expressed or reflected upon among participants. Participants may have not considered their opinions in certain ways and have the overarching decision as to what they discuss with the interviewer. An imbalance in the collected data can therefore

be exacerbated if the target populations are not equally represented. In order to address such issues, this research aimed to incorporate as many identified participant groups as possible, using a range of different methods and sampling techniques to make the data as representative as possible. Data was also obtained in a reflexive manner (discussed later in this chapter). Information was collected on a range of topics, exploring the experiences that UniVols had while on assignment, the experiences that partner organisations had while hosting UniVols, the impacts on host communities, and the success of the assignments according to the various stakeholders involved in the programme over the years, (for a list of interview questions for various groups of participants, see Appendix 3). The interviews ensured there was a large study population proportionate to the number of potential participants, and a depth of data. This enabled the researcher to address the proposed research questions and identify research gaps.

#### **5.4.2 Focus groups**

Five focus groups were included within the qualitative methods used in the field research, adding to the depth of data. Focus groups are described by Brockington and Sullivan (2003: 58) as a “discussion of a particular issue where it is instructive to learn from the way people discuss things”. Focus groups encourage collective engagement, which can help promote discussion around particular issues and shed further understanding on issues that affect the particular group. This allows focus groups to go further than individual interviews, because of their ‘synergist potentials’ (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2011). This aspect is valued in qualitative research because of the way it showcases the ‘intersubjective dynamics’ within the target audience, revealing codes of behaviour and ways of doing things within certain societal groups (Cloke *et al*, 2004; Lloyd-Evans, 2005; Crang and Crook, 2007).

Focus groups typically involve a small group of participants discussing particular issues related to the topic of research (Cameron, 2000: 84). All five focus groups conducted for this research contained smaller groups of two participants each, yet still enabled fluid discussions between participants. Three out of the five focus groups were conducted with staff from partner organisations, discussing the impact that UniVols had made within their respective organisations and the variety of experiences that they had during this time. One other focus group was conducted with two VSA staff members who were involved in the recruitment and management of UniVols before and during their assignments, whilst the other was conducted with two regular volunteers who had spent a number of years volunteering in a particular location. Both groups had interacted with a number of UniVols

over that time. The focus groups were unplanned in their nature, with participants offering to speak either together or separately with the researcher. The opportunity to talk in a small group was chosen by the researcher, considering the potential that group discussions could add to the collected data-set (see Lloyd-Evans, 2005).

The data collected through these focus groups contributed to the research project, giving insight to issues that are often talked about in closed groups (Crang and Cook, 2007). Understanding how staff in partner organisations talk about their experiences together with UniVols sheds light on the true impacts that occurred during volunteer placement. Lloyd-Evans (2005) also argues that focus groups have become popular in development research because of their potential to redress unequal power relations, a method which diminishes the role of the researcher and encourages participation from all participants. Whilst focus groups can again have issues with representation, and hold the potential to evoke a “misguided notion of a ‘homogenous community’ or ‘group consensus’” (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2011: 155), they are still able to provide useful data if utilised in an appropriate manner. Similar to interviews, it is also important to note that focus groups can only determine a limited range of data as expressed by participants; what they are comfortable sharing with the interviewer in front of other participants, and the manner in which they reflect upon and discuss the questions that are presented to them. Participants can, however, feel more comfortable during the interview process when talking with peers, creating an atmosphere that can be conducive to fostering a positive discussion. The data collected from all five focus groups provided a useful insight that would otherwise be unobtainable through standard interview methods.

### **5.4.3 Observation**

The use of qualitative observation techniques has provided yet another useful research tool that complements other methods in the data collection process. Observation is described by Sarantakos (1998) as a method that relies on vision as the main means of data collection, approaching reality in its ‘natural structure’ and viewing events as they unravel. Such methods are less formal than structured methods like surveys and interviews, allowing the researcher to become involved in the area of study and understand ideas associated with place and community (Phillips and Johns, 2012). The use of observation techniques allows researchers to utilise three main processes; counting, which charts the ‘ebb and flow’ of spatio-temporal activity; complementing, which provides supporting evidence to other

methods; and contextualising, which provides understanding and ‘in-depth interpretation’ (Kearns, 2000: 105).

Observation methods for this research were utilised in two main areas, in Wellington at VSA headquarters, and during field-based research in the four different field sites. Whilst in the field, standard observation and participant observation techniques were utilised to gain a stronger understanding of the surroundings that VSA worked in, the role that partner organisations carry out in their respective communities, and the conditions that UniVols live and work. Observation provided important contextualisation and complementation, supporting the data that was collected from all stakeholder groups. In particular, the opportunity to visit partner organisations was valuable in understanding the long-term impacts that volunteers have. The researcher could observe whether the work that UniVols had delivered was sustainable over time. When visiting the field, Kearns (2000: 116) argues that it is important to experience the position of local people and their day-to-day livelihoods, as “we cannot blend in as researchers unless we participate in the social relations we are seeking to understand”. Participant observation in this instance was administered by spending time with UniVols in the field and understanding what they did in their spare time. Staying with a number of UniVols in the field also provided a valuable insight on the conditions in which they live in-country, giving an understanding of the support that VSA provides to its volunteers.

Participant observation methods were also utilised during visits to VSA headquarters. This gave understanding on the recruitment and management processes that VSA staff in New Zealand use to prepare volunteers and provide support during their assignments. The opportunity to participate in the interview process for the 2015 cohort of UniVol volunteers gave a unique insight into the protocol that VSA adopts to scrutinise potential volunteers, and the qualities they look for, specifically in their UniVols. This form of observation fits within the ‘participant-as-observer’ category, where the researcher plays a more involved role, asking interview questions and offering opinion on the experience of the candidate (Phillips and Johns, 2012). Observation also took place during the four-day briefing workshop for the 2015 cohort of volunteers in November, 2014. This again provided a significant amount of information on the issues covered by VSA staff in their efforts to prepare volunteers for the field, as well as the reaction of the volunteers to the overall experience. Such observations allowed the researcher to play a less active role as an ‘observer-as-participant’, listening to the presentations of VSA staff and observing the



dynamics of the volunteer audience (Phillips and Johns, 2012). This information, coupled with interview data from volunteers who could reflect on such processes during and after their assignments, provides the research with valuable information on the support that VSA offers to prospective volunteers and the impact it has in terms of preparing volunteers for their assignments.

At this point, it is also pertinent to acknowledge the position of the researcher, albeit briefly, as such discussion will resume later in this chapter. Having undertaken a UniVol assignment myself in South Africa in 2010, I was able to experience first-hand the processes that VSA utilise when recruiting volunteers (see Plate 5.1). I also witnessed how VSA manages volunteers in the field on a wide range of issues, and upon return back to New Zealand in de-briefings. Whilst this does pose a number of positionality issues (discussed in detail later), it also gives empathy to the programme and the organisation itself, as well as an understanding of the opinions expressed by the research participants. Such observation, therefore, offers a small contribution toward the collected data, providing complementary knowledge to help address the research questions effectively.



**Plate 5.1: My VSA UniVol experience as a sports advisor in East London, South Africa, in 2010 (Source: Author's own)**

## 5.5 Sampling

A number of qualitative and quantitative sampling methods are utilised in social science research to ensure effective coverage of sample populations. Whilst discussions around

sampling may be considered to be one of the ‘least sexy facet[s]’ of research (Noy, 2008), it is nonetheless important to consider when explaining which participants were selected for the research and why. While most research projects are constrained by some means, whether by time or the resources available, researchers can be confident and extrapolate collected data if their samples remain ‘reasonably representative’ of the study population (Overton and van Diermen, 2003). Time and resources were a factor in accessing the chosen study population for this research, primarily because of the vast geographical distances between all UniVol host communities and former UniVols themselves (see Chapter Ten). To limit such constraints, this research employed the use of three distinct sampling methods; purposeful, convenience, and snowball sampling, to ensure there was an adequate and representative sampling size. This provided enough qualitative and quantitative data to address the research questions with a good depth of information.

### **5.5.1 Purposeful sampling**

Purposeful sampling methods were employed in this research to identify a large number of participants. Such sampling is described by Sarantakos (1998) as when the researcher deliberately chooses participants who are, in their opinion, relevant to the research. Generally, logical candidates are individuals who are considered to have experience with the chosen topic, or are able to give expert views on the subject matter (Golledge and Stimson, 1987; Higginbottom, 2004). Purposeful sampling can prove useful as an initial starting point for building the study population, where the researcher can consider groups that are easily identifiable to the chosen topic. This means, therefore, that the sample of participants largely depends on the judgement of the researcher, which can lead to issues with representation if the judgement is incorrect (Overton and van Diermen, 2003). Purposeful sampling is also quicker than other sampling methods, as a section of the study population can be considered by the researcher in a relatively short time-span. The use of purposeful sampling methods for this research were valuable in forming an initial target audience, as key stakeholder groups were easily identifiable because of the intimate knowledge of the UniVol programme held by the researcher. Selecting the majority of VSA staff based in Wellington, as well as a significant number of returned UniVols, was also done purposefully as the researcher was aware of their various involvements in the programme. Accessing a number of participants through this method ensured that there was a healthy number of informants to begin the research phase, which was then expanded through the use of other sampling techniques.

### **5.5.2 Snowball sampling**

Snowball sampling methods were also important in gaining access to a large number of participants related to the research topic. Snowball sampling is defined by Noy (2008: 330) as, “when the researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants”. Typically, the researcher will have met with an informant recruited through another sampling method, and then ask whether they are able to recommend anyone else who may fit within the sample population (Sarantakos, 1998; Bradshaw and Stratford, 2000; Willis, 2006). Sampling in this form may then ‘snowball’, if the researcher continues to repeat the process with the new participants. This method is beneficial, as it allows the researcher to seek experienced participants more easily, utilising the knowledge of previous informants (Valentine, 2005). Snowball sampling also helps the researcher when the list of participants has ‘dried up’, supplying more participants, in some cases participants who might belong to hidden populations who are inaccessible through other sampling methods, and allowing the study sample to expand (Noy, 2008). Extensive snowball methods do run the risk of becoming very selective if over utilised, however, as control of the sampling phase is given to the participants who can suggest people that they are connected to socially (Overton and van Diermen, 2003; Noy, 2008).

Snowball sampling methods proved critical in two major stages of developing the study population for this research. First, staff members at VSA, who were selected through purposeful sampling methods, were able to provide the researcher with useful contact details of UniVols, former VSA staff, and in-country VSA staff, owing to their positions within the organisation. As the researcher was only familiar with a limited number of people connected to the programme, snowball methods significantly increased the number of participants when they agreed to be part of the research. Establishing contact with VSA staff in the field, and then engaging in discussions about the partner organisations and individuals who had been connected with UniVols in the field, then proved to be the second important aspect of utilising snowball sampling. The in-country staff in all four field locations were vital in identifying the staff from partner organisations who worked closely with both current and former UniVols, as well as former staff members who worked with UniVols. Some staff were also able to introduce the researcher to selected participants, creating an extra layer of trust and confidence for them to participate in the research project. Staff were also able to introduce the researcher to other current volunteers who had been on assignment for a long period of time. They were then given the opportunity to participate. Without this information, it would have proved very difficult to identify and engage with the number of

participants that were finally connected to the field research. Issues within the four overseas field destinations, specifically a lack of technology and communications, would have made it very difficult to establish initial contact with certain participants. This would have potentially limited the quality and depth of the collected data. Snowball sampling, therefore, was pivotal in overcoming this barrier.

### **5.5.3 Convenience sampling**

Convenience sampling was used to gain access to a small number of participants who were not included through purposeful or snowball sampling methods. Also called ‘accidental sampling’, convenience sampling in its simplest form selects participants because they are readily available to participate in the research (Sarantakos, 1998; Overton and van Diermen, 2003). Similar to purposeful sampling, issues can arise with representation, as data collected by participants who are conveniently included in the sample population may produce prejudiced views that do not reflect the wider study population (Golledge and Stimson, 1987). Participants sampled through such methods, however, reduced the difficulties associated with identifying and contacting prospective participants, therefore saving time and resources. Within this research, convenience sampling methods were used as a complementary sampling method, collecting data from participants who were informally engaged in social interaction, but fitted within the target population. Three regular VSA volunteers were incorporated in such fashion, met at social gatherings that the researcher had been invited to. They expressed an interest in the research project, and were then invited to participate. Data was then collected from these participants on the positive and negative experiences of living in-country, and how they had experienced working and living alongside UniVol volunteers. This provided useful data that would not have been collected via any other sampling method, owing to the fortuitous nature in which the participants and the researcher met.

## **5.6 Analysing and reporting the collected data**

The data that was collected through the field-based research process required extensive analysis and coding before it could be used to address the research questions. During the field-based research, a dictaphone was used to capture the qualitative data that was provided through interviews and focus groups. This method was chosen over other forms, such as note-taking, as it provided greater flexibility for the participant and the researcher in the interview dynamic. Marshall and Rossman (2006) believe note-taking to be problematic in some instances, as it can interfere and inhibit participants from expressing their perspectives

toward the researcher. This was considered, and note-taking was only to be used as a secondary option if participants chose not to have their interviews and focus groups recorded. In all cases, however, consent was given. Note-taking was used solely for observation methods, to record the relevant data identified by the researcher. Participants were therefore able to engage with the researcher in an environment that encouraged open dialogue. Following the field-based research, all interview and focus group data were then transcribed in full. Although a time-consuming process (Crang and Cook, 2007; Mann, 2016), Crang and Cook (2007) argue that recording and transcribing is vitally important, as it reveals the way participants have told their stories within the ‘nuts and bolts’ of their responses. Transcriptions provided a breadth of data that then needed to be deconstructed and coded into relevant themes. Those forms of grey literature that were gathered during the field-based research process were analysed and incorporated into the research as other forms of literature were.

Tolich and Davidson (1999) state that data analysis is an important way to identify the key themes and patterns that are inherent within the collected data. It draws meaning from the information that is gathered, “arranging and presenting information in order to search for ideas” (Minichiello, 1990: 285). Throughout the field-based research process, only a basic analysis of the data was undertaken. This was done in the attempt to attain a saturation of data around the themes and areas that had been constructed, and to identify and elaborate on those themes where further data was required (Minichiello, 1990). For example, issues related to the roles that expatriate communities and local VSA employees played in affecting the experiences of UniVols, were areas that required further analysis within interviews and focus groups. At the conclusion of the data collection and the field-based research process, the majority of the data analysis was then conducted. To code the data, interview and focus group transcriptions, as well as observation notes, were broken down into key themes and areas (Chantler, 2014; Mann, 2016). These key points were then merged together into documents and analysed, categorising the common perceptions that were made by participants and identifying those quotations that best represented those ideas. This was done in order to achieve an element of uniformity in the ideas that were presented, as unfortunately not all ideas from the data can be demonstrated. Those key themes that were drawn from the data then helped shape the results chapters.

Knowledge gaps were identified within the preliminary literature reviews that were undertaken before the field-based research, helping shape the interview schedules. Those

ideas that were not included within this, but were represented in the data, subsequently helped reshape the results chapters. This enabled the results chapters to reflect participant's ideas, illustrating the impact that volunteers, hosts, and VSA staff members believe the UniVol project had made, and what the main causes of this were. Minichiello (1990) argues that there are challenges to ensuring the data is representative when coding, as the sheer scale of the collected data and the temptation for the researcher to look for hidden meanings can exist. This requires the researcher to be organised, taking the necessary time to consider those relevant themes and ideas (Chantler, 2014). In order to emphasise the opinions of those participants who were included in the research, numerous direct quotations from transcribed interviews and focus groups were presented within the results chapters. Observation data was used to support certain findings of the research. Overall, the data analysis process was important in illustrating the key issues that were presented by participants, ensuring the results chapters are representative of their combined opinions.

In terms of data presentation, there are measures that have been put in place to accurately identify the source of the reported data. Throughout this entire thesis, those Key Informant quotations that have been extracted from either focus groups or interviews have been identified accordingly at the end of each quotation. The data that was collected through observation is also acknowledged when it is presented. Key Informant quotations also specify the country or region they relate to, illustrating where such experiences or perceptions have taken place. These measures hopefully provide extra clarity and context to the presented data.

## **5.7 Positionality and reflexivity**

The role of positionality and reflexivity in research practice has become a key feature to methodological discussion over time, emphasising the movement away from the positivist and realist-focused ontologies. This is another aspect to the mixed methods approaches that are used within this research. Positionality “determines how social and professional relationships are framed in the field, with consequent effects on research content, analysis and results” (Wesche *et al*, 2010: 59). Sultana (2007) argues that research is affected both spatially and temporarily, influenced by the politics of place and development specific to that location. Such impacts must be considered within qualitative research, as they can significantly contribute to the nature of the data collected. Reflexivity encapsulates a “self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher” (England, 1994: 82). Murray and Overton (2003) argue that it is impossible for

your individuality to not influence the research process in some way, therefore making it imperative to consider what you represent and how you are ‘socially positioned’ (Sibley, 1995). How this impacts the collected data is significant. Reflecting on positionality and reflexivity builds on the idea that “all understandings of research are borne out of human interpretation of process, content and/or dissemination”, adding depth and complex understanding to data sets (Hurd, 1998: 201). It is the aim of this section to analyse the make-up of the researcher and the fieldwork sites, to consider how the researcher can influence the data collected. The power relations and deep-seated issues that are inherent when conducting research in developing communities will also be considered.

### **5.7.1 The researcher**

Phillips and Johns (2012) stress that it is important that researchers should recognise that they cannot be ‘objective, impartial robots’ upon entering the field. There are a host of influencing factors carried by the individual researcher that can influence the perspectives portrayed by research informants. Such reflection should consider the researcher’s viewpoints, their past experiences, and their personal characteristics; their gender, race, class and age (Mullings, 1999). I, myself, am a young Caucasian male from a relatively privileged, middle-class, western background. I have had the opportunity to gain a high level of education, having conducted research previous to this thesis with developing communities in Southern Africa at the Masters level. It is worth considering how I, myself, have impacted on the research process in two considerably different stages; that of the research conducted here in New Zealand, and the research conducted in the four overseas research locations.

The first aspects of the qualitative field-based research involved interviews with former UniVol volunteers and both current and former VSA staff members based in New Zealand. As noted previously, an established connection between a certain participants that I had met through my own volunteering experience, in South Africa in 2010, already existed. These established relationships positively influenced the data collected, as a level of trust and familiarity existed. My positionality, as a young researcher who had been a previous volunteer with VSA, also positively contributed to the incorporation of other previous UniVol volunteers into the research process. This was owed to the level of familiarity and our mutual links with the programme. All volunteers had similar university backgrounds as myself, a majority of them from the University of Otago. The majority of participants also shared similar backgrounds as myself, an aspect attributed to the qualities and skills that VSA look for in their UniVol volunteers during their recruitment process. Sharing these

similarities and conducting research in familiar settings, in a first language which is comfortable for participants, limits the ‘stranger’ element of difference that Katz (1994) discusses. This provided a connecting element between participant and researcher, allowing participants to give more accurate representations of their experiences. Such familiarity decreases the likelihood of participants giving what they deem to be the ‘right answer’, when they are unfamiliar with the researcher (Willis, 2006).

The second stage of research was conducted in four overseas field sites, described in more detail in Chapter Four. During this stage, contact was made with participants from partner organisations, as well as current staff and current volunteers on assignment in specific locations. Similar to before, current UniVol volunteers, regular volunteers and VSA staff reacted positively to my positionality, as they shared familiar educational experiences and backgrounds as myself. Conducting research with participants from partner organisations, however, is where my positionality had greater potential to influence the collected data. Numerous scholars have commented on the impacts of positionality concerning western researchers in cross cultural settings (see Easterby-Smith and Malina, 1994; Sibley, 1995; Scheyvens *et al*, 2003; Wesche *et al*, 2010; Scheyvens *et al*, 2014). Sidaway (1992: 403) argues that “when, as so often in journeys to the Third World, we move towards the top of a social hierarchy in a society that we often do not well understand, the results can be problematic”. In conducting research with locally-based participants in overseas field settings, it was vital that I was aware of what I could possibly represent.

Adams and Megaw (1997) reinforce the power of education as a major aspect of positionality, having the ability to access networks and support, and the opportunities that come with that. In all four field sites throughout the Pacific Islands, the access to education, especially at the tertiary level, is increasingly more limited than it is for individuals in developed nations. Certain participants had higher levels of education than others, who were not afforded access to even basic educational opportunities. Possessing a high level of education had the potential, therefore, to influence the conveyed information, possibly effecting the data set. Gender relations in all four research sites may also have influenced the type of data collected. A number of participants commented that societies in the fieldwork locations are traditionally male-dominated, especially in the Melanesian regions of Vanuatu, PNG and the ARB. This is represented in the quotation below;

“Here, there is a certain hierarchic way of thinking, especially between males and females and their role and function... So youth is one way people look at you, whether you are young, or whether you are male or female too, and whether



you are expat or not. If you are a young female and an expat, then you have three strikes against you, and we have all been through that and have different techniques to deal with it... But I do say to the female volunteers as a general thing to just be a bit careful because you have to work around that.” KI 095 – ARB

Research undertaken in this study was not gender specific, incorporating both males and females. Being a male, however, may have encouraged male participants to be more inclined to participate, but may have alternatively limited the information that female participants were willing to contribute.

Finally, being a ‘westerner’, with a different racial profile also had the potential to impact on the perspectives conveyed by local participants. Samoa, Vanuatu, PNG and the ARB have all experienced various forms of colonial rule (see Chapter Four). There are nations, however, that are developing growing tourism industries (exemplified in Plate 5.2), which can change the perceptions that local people hold toward foreigners. Within the field, there were instances where being a New Zealander was positive. In Samoa, for example, there currently exist strong links between Samoa and New Zealand, where a large number of Samoans either live in New Zealand, or have visited. This created a sense of familiarity, fostering conversation between the researcher and the participants.



**Plate 5.2: Popular tourism sites in Samoa (To Sua Ocean Trench) and Vanuatu (Riri Blue Hole) (Source: Author’s research)**

In PNG and the ARB, many local people were supportive toward my research project on finding out I was from New Zealand. Such attitudes relate to the role that New Zealand played in brokering peace during the devastating civil war that plagued this region. The quotation from a host participant below illustrates this point. This positionality helped establish friendly relationships between individuals and myself, softening any potential unease.

“[New Zealanders are liked] a lot more than the Australians, and I guess that was all because of the crisis, during the ceasefire and that. They have seen the difference between how New Zealanders are, and how they act towards the locals here, and they respect it a lot. As long as they know you are from New Zealand, they are very friendly to you... I think the first thing before you get along with someone, is that you have to understand each other. The more he knows about you and your background, he will open up more. Being a New Zealander helps as well, and it's just about understanding the culture and all of that, it helps a lot.” KI 096 – ARB

Before such relationships could be built, however, it was easy for participants and people within the community to assume that I was a tourist. Upon understanding that I was conducting research, however, and was neither a government official nor a tourist, then such representations were mitigated.

Although positionality factors can influence the data collected, there were a number of factors that were utilised to make participants feel comfortable in the research process. As mentioned before, sampling techniques like snowball sampling were beneficial in making participants feel comfortable, as I was introduced to them through familiar acquaintances in the field where relationships and trust were already established. When conducting the field-based research, the entire process was transparent. I attempted to build good rapport with all participants, a factor that Wesche *et al* (2010) consider essential when attempting to include a diverse range of people into respective research projects. Expressing empathy and sensitivity with participants from different backgrounds, while maintaining an awareness of what I could possibly represent to the participants, aimed to ensure that the power relations between myself and the participants remained as equal as possible.

### **5.7.2 Power relations**

Another aspect that is closely linked with the positionality of the researcher are the inherent power relations that can exist within the interaction phases of research. Power relations, an ideology inherent to feminist geographies (England, 2006; Sultana, 2007), are described by Scheyvens *et al* (2003) to be ‘perceived differences of inferiority’ between researchers and communities. Historically, social science research has often marginalised and inadequately represented many sections of the population (Phillips and Johns, 2012). Kobayashi (1994: 79) argues that “what will not change is the fact that every discursive field is a site of negotiation and struggle for power, and the politics of doing fieldwork will inevitably come up against politics in the field”. Issues can be exacerbated in research where ‘relatively privileged’ western researchers conduct research within developing nations and study people living ‘in poverty’ (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003). Boundaries can be created through current

and historical issues, as well as differences in race, gender, age, economic status and sexuality. This requires researchers to show a responsibility toward their participants, by not taking advantage of their positions, whatever they may be, and considering the implications of their involvement (Dowling, 2000). During the field-based research, the power relations between researcher and participants remained relatively balanced, as all participants were from New Zealand and of similar background to the researcher. Research conducted in the overseas field settings however, created possible imbalances that were important to consider.

Historically, factors such as colonialism have extensively marginalised many societies throughout the world. Sibley (1995) argues that European nations are innately implicated with colonial practice, which harnessed racial stigma and segregation by creating black and white rules. In relation to this research, many nations throughout the Pacific Islands are considered to be ‘developing nations’, faced with issues such as poverty, poor governance, political instability, and in some cases, civil war (for specific detail of each field area, see Chapter Four). A number of nations have also had direct governance input from western nations, beginning in the colonial period and still evident today in the monitoring and quasi-administrative roles that nations like New Zealand and Australia hold with many Pacific Island countries. In relation to research practice, Howitt and Stevens (2010: 42) argue that colonial legacies have reinforced “domination and exploitation through the attitudes and differential power embodied in its research relationships with ‘others’; its dismissal of their rights and knowledge, its intrusive and non-participatory methodologies, and often also its goals and its use of research findings”. When conducting this research, it was essential to consider how potential power imbalances might exist in contact with participants from different nations, and what actions were required to make participants feel most comfortable.

Scheyvens *et al* (2003) argue that by recognising the power dimensions of relationships, it is possible to conduct research in ways that empower participants and minimise any potential discomfort that could arise. It was important in my field research that I acted in a manner that was appropriate to each individual participant. Being ‘culturally grounded’ and ‘institutionally sensitive’ (Sultana, 2007), by actively involving local participants in interviews, and creating a relaxed and informal atmosphere, allowed participants to express their opinions in a free and open way. Attempting to understand facets of the cultural values and customs within each individual setting, and showing respect and sensitivity in the way I dressed and conversed with participants, also helped empower local participants and made them feel comfortable with the research process. Being reflexive

in my approach to people in host communities allowed me to deconstruct potential issues that could have surfaced from existing power imbalances. This allowed for a sensitive research environment, while upholding ethical practices that governed the research protocols.

## **5.8 Ethics**

### **5.8.1 University application and Maori consultation**

In order to comply with ethical regulations, a Category A Human Ethics application from the University of Otago (see Appendix 5) was submitted and approved. Considered to be an important aspect of the research process, ethical approval demonstrates that all field-based research related to the research project adheres to the principles that support ethical and transparent research, as governed by the University of Otago. Taking these steps indicates a commitment to representing the University of Otago in the most appropriate manner during the field-based research, applying ethical codes and standards that the University of Otago expects its students and staff to maintain. Ethics applications are set in place to ensure the protection and anonymity of participants, at the same time maintaining the credibility of the University of Otago as an institution. In association with ethical compliance, Health and Safety Plans (see Appendix 4) were put in place for all research trips, to demonstrate the awareness of safety-related issues associated with fieldwork. My contact information and accommodation details during the fieldwork process enabled the Geography Department to establish contact in case of an emergency. Identifying potential hazards and becoming familiar with local evacuation plans and safety procedures in specific locations further reinforced the health and safety procedures upheld by the Geography Department. Further particulars related to the research, including travel insurance and health cover, were also arranged before fieldwork to comply with safety procedures and fieldwork logistics.

In relation to research conducted in the Pacific Islands, the University of Otago has in place a Pacific Research Protocol that acknowledges the university's commitment to supporting Pacific academic progress (University of Otago, 2011). Importantly, the University of Otago recognises the growing connection between the Pacific region and New Zealand, and sets forth stringent guidelines for prospective researchers in order to protect the relationships that the University has established. Pacific values, ethical standards, and other protocols for research are covered, which require researchers to conduct appropriate research and protect the high level of scholarship established by the University of Otago (University

of Otago, 2011). Such standards were acknowledged and closely followed during this research project.

Another central aspect to the ethical procedures of this research project relate to consultation with the *Ngai Tahu* Research Consultation Committee. The University of Otago has a working memorandum of understanding with *Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu*, and encourages prospective researchers to consult with the Research Consultation Committee in conjunction with ethical approval. Consultation encourages the dissemination of research within the wider local community, and enables the Research Consultation Committee to consider whether research projects may be of importance for local Maori interests. Through consultation, this research was deemed to be of interest to the committee, and will be disseminated to the committee upon completion. These actions will uphold the ethical principles acknowledged by the University of Otago (see Appendix 6).

### **5.8.2 Ethical issues**

In acknowledging the power imbalances of cross-cultural research and positionality that the researcher holds, it is important to then mitigate such issues by adhering to ethical research practice. History has shown that exploitative methods of inquiry have been utilised extensively in the past, furthering the interests of researchers, whilst marginalising and excluding research participants (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003). By the 1980's, Christians (2011) identifies that most major scholarly associations had developed guidelines around informed consent, to oppose deception and ensure privacy, confidentiality, and accuracy. This research project has observed the ethical principles of research as dictated by the University of Otago, and has aimed to conduct ethical research that is appropriate to those participants in the study population. One of the major ethical challenges to research is finding a balance in producing research that is 'mutually defined' (Sultana, 2007). Those studied should not be seen as merely a 'source of data', but valued in a way that allows the research to have a reciprocal element, providing comfort to those who are included (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003; Phillips and Johns 2012). In order to do this, it is important to acknowledge the relationships that researchers build with participants, and how to manage them in particular times and places (Dowling, 2000).

The first steps taken to ensure that robust relationships were formed between myself and those participants involved in this research, was in the way the project was communicated to them. A number of academics argue that it is imperative not to deceive participants in any way, providing full information on the research project and ensuring that

there will be no negative ramifications for those involved (Tolich and Davidson, 1999; Wesche *et al*, 2010). Any form of qualitative research inevitably invades participants' privacy in some form, but measures can be taken to ensure that they remain protected (Homan, 1991; Dowling, 2000). All informants that were approached to participate in this research were given an Information Sheet (see Appendix 1), which outlined the main aims of the research project and how the information gathered was to be utilised. As well as this, a Consent Form was then presented to participants (see Appendix 2), which outlined the measures put in place to protect their identity and privacy. Participants were welcome to abstain from answering any question that they felt was inappropriate, or withdraw from the research at any time if they were uncomfortable. Banks and Scheyvens (2014: 164) argue that informed consent is imperative, as it is "premised on the notion that the person has a complete and thorough understanding of the aims and processes of the research". Participants were also able to acknowledge whether they would wish to remain anonymous, and were reassured that measures were put in place to ensure that the information collected remained confidential.

Homan (1991) argues that the unethical treatment of participants will generally result in poorer data. Concern for human dignity is 'central' to research projects, and it is important to act in a sensitive and respectful manner to all participants (Adams and Megaw, 1997; Scheyvens *et al*, 2003). When sourcing participants, Banks and Scheyvens (2014) argue that any attempts that are made to 'win over informants', in order to gain vital information, are unethical. Participants in this research were made aware that there were no compensations for their time given to the project. In order to establish an element of reciprocity, however, participants were asked whether they would be interested in receiving a copy of the final project. Phillips and Johns (2012) stress that responsible research should include not only engaging with communities when in the field, but also feeding the findings back to communities in a meaningful way. Copies of this thesis will be distributed to participants who raised interest in receiving the final results of the project. By doing so, the practice of 'rape research' is avoided. This is a phrase noted by Scheyvens and Storey (2003), when collected results are used exclusively for the researcher's own interests. All measures utilised throughout the entire research process ensured that the information collected was obtained in the most ethical way possible.

## **5.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has explained in detail the various methodological steps that were undertaken in the research process. The research strategy was detailed, explaining the different epistemologies that have influenced the overall approach to collecting data for this project. Methods of obtaining data were also discussed, highlighting the various methods used in the field-based research. The specific qualitative and quantitative research methods that were employed in all stages of the research process were outlined, explaining the way that each method was utilised. Methods of sampling and analysis were also discussed, as well as a critical reflection of the position of the researcher and the inherent power relations involved in researching in various locations specific to this research. Finally, the ethical standards employed throughout the research process were also illustrated. It was imperative that a diverse range of data was acquired from a number of different participants to address the research questions. By drawing on mixed methods, and conducting research in an ethical manner, a substantial data set emerged. Subsequent analysis of the data has provided the base from which to address the research questions, exploring the impact of younger IDV volunteers.

## Chapter Six

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### **Western perceptions of the UniVol programme**



## **6.1 Introduction**

Following on from the literature review chapters, which have situated the position of the youth volunteer within IDV, this chapter will seek to explore the UniVol volunteer programme in detail. This discussion will report findings that directly address RQ #1, identifying the impacts of the UniVol programme as perceived by volunteers and VSA as a sending organisation. Initially, this chapter will examine the various assignments that are undertaken by UniVol volunteers. Following this discussion will be an overall evaluation of the programme itself, detailing the major successes and challenges. The main factors that can affect assignments in producing outcome, as well as the important aspects that lead to successful UniVol assignments, will be detailed. This discussion will emphasise the roles that best suit youth volunteers in a broader sense, as well as the conditions that support effective youth volunteering assignments. These factors will be considered in relation to the perspectives of the volunteers themselves, the partner organisations with whom they work, and VSA as a volunteer sending organisation. In published literature, the perspectives of youth volunteers alone are often noted to be more self-centred, focusing on their own personal growth (Tiessen and Heron, 2012). Gaining a more rounded perspective of youth volunteering is therefore imperative in understanding how youth “might achieve more meaningful and enduring impacts in the developing world” (Tiessen and Heron, 2012: 55).

What younger volunteers deliver, as opposed to the older and more professionalised regular VSA volunteers, will be incorporated within this discussion. This will be important in revealing the distinctions inherent within youth volunteers and how such distinctions can support partner organisations in various ways. Discussion will then move toward the organisational aspects that VSA incorporate to manage the programme, exploring factors that are necessary to consider in supporting younger volunteers. It is the aim of this chapter to show the specific potential that youth volunteers have in their contribution to IDV. Certain conditions enable a more effective contribution, depending on the characteristics of the volunteer, the support they have from the sending organisation, and the detail to which the partner organisation understands what younger volunteers offer.

## **6.2 The nature of UniVol assignments**

VSA became motivated to introduce a youth-based volunteer programme in the mid-2000s. This decision coincided with a larger global movement to reintroduce younger volunteers within IDV (Tiessen and Heron, 2012; Baillie Smith *et al*, 2016). At an organisational level,

VSA also expressed a desire to incorporate younger volunteers into its volunteer profile, as it became evident that the average volunteer age had increased over the previous decades. One VSA staff member reflects on the change in the quotation below;

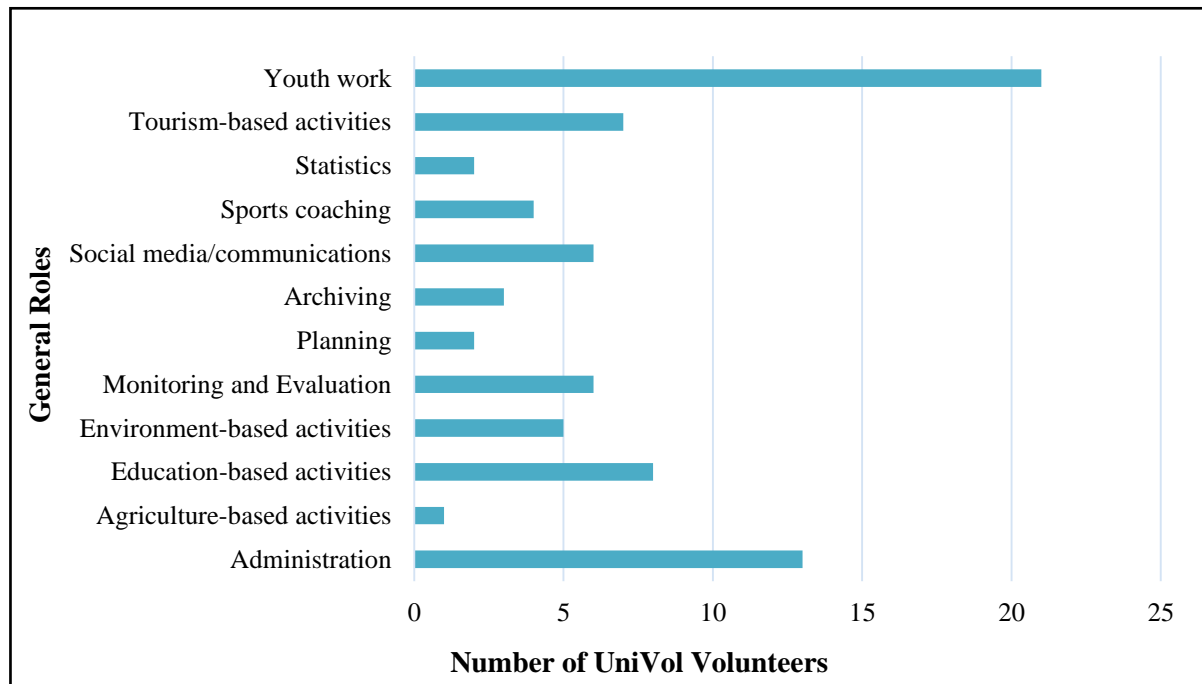
“So when I first started here they were trialling this whole how do we get in more younger people, when the average age at that time was something like 55 or 56. So they were trying to encourage the next generation of volunteers... So that’s where the UniVol programme came in. We looked at moving up to that next tier of qualified younger people [from the previous school leaver programmes].” KI 055

Through this period, VSA trialled two youth-orientated volunteer programmes, one in partnership with another NGO, and the other based on its earlier school leaver programme (see Chapter Four for more detail). After their trial periods, both options were considered to not fit within VSA’s aims of providing tangible and effective outcomes for host communities. The quotation below explains the issues VSA saw in their delivery;

“There had been a couple of programmes that we had looked at... and we ended up doing Student Partnerships Worldwide as well, but that was more that we recruited for them, we didn’t actually have any say in their programme... we couldn’t determine what the outcomes were going to be. We had another school leaver programme [at the time] that we had trialled and it hadn’t been that successful, in that it hadn’t given much to the communities that they were working in, hadn’t added much to the partner organisations that they were involved with... Our Chair of Council at the time had been a previous school leaver, so that was close to her heart as well, being able to find something, but we needed to make sure that it actually added value. So yes we want to give New Zealanders an opportunity to volunteer, and that is one of our core objectives, but not at the expense of clumping a whole lot of people onto a partner organisation that couldn’t cope and couldn’t get anything out of it as well. So it was that balance of being able to offer something that could be useful to the partner, but also getting a group of students that were actually going to get something out of it themselves, but that they had some skills that they could offer... In essence, the idea was that they would be third year students who would go off and do this for a year and come back and do their Masters in development. That was the ideal plan, but obviously we had no control over what happened after” KI 056

Questions arose about the ability of less-skilled volunteers to implement assignments in a manner that was conducive to the benefit of the communities they worked in. For such reasons, VSA then looked toward a different tier of younger volunteers. The UniVol programme was then established in 2006, a programme that worked with university students who held general interests in the development field (for more information on the formation of the programme, see Chapter Four).

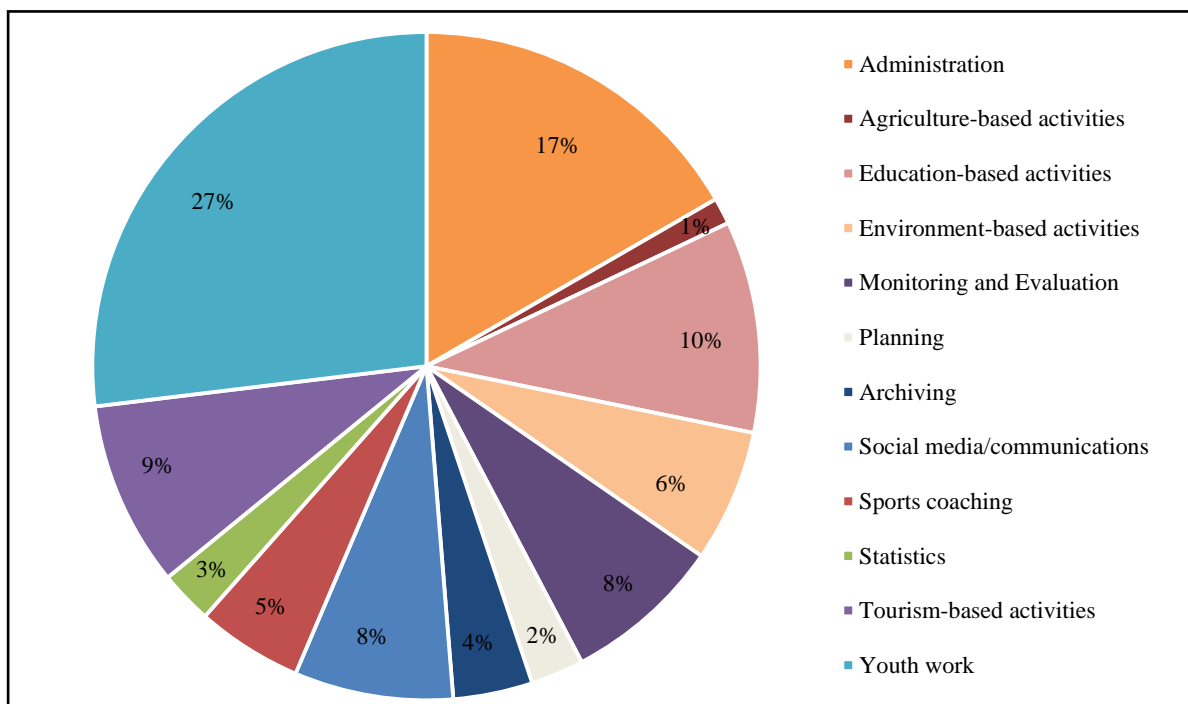
To date, the UniVol programme has remained an important programme within VSA's volunteering profile. Throughout its history, volunteers have been placed on a wide range of assignments, situated within various government departments, NGO's, and community groups. This is represented through Figures 6.1 and 6.2, which show the general sectors that assignments have fitted within from the programmes establishment to the end of 2015, and the percentage of these societal areas in relation to the overall number of UniVol assignments that have been delivered throughout this time.



**Figure 6.1: UniVol Assignments from 2007 to 2015 (Source: Author's Research)**

Initially, the scope for UniVol assignments focused on placing younger volunteers into youth-driven roles that were broader in their nature, aiming to avoid the issues that had been associated with the earlier two piloted youth volunteer schemes. The programme was deemed to be viable after this first year, as the positive outcomes exhibited in the first cohort of volunteers in 2007 outweighed the issues that arose in the pilot stages. The programme therefore continued, with the assignment roles of UniVols expanding into further areas within local communities. The skills-sets of prospective UniVol volunteers were examined in more detail as the programme advanced, as specific volunteers were considered for more diverse roles. Such roles were developed with partner organisations that were either working with VSA already, or developed following discussions with organisations that wanted to work host VSA volunteers for specific roles. This change of approach within VSA is exemplified in the quotation below;

“So I guess those earlier ones were sort of straight youth worker ones and then as they progressed and they carried on, we were like oh ok so that person... you know we learnt where we went wrong and thought oh ok this person has these skills and there is actually an assignment for a legal person in a disabilities area or something, so they could come in and help. So we sort of started to tailor it a bit more, when it was quite broad at the beginning.” KI 055



**Figure 6.2: Allocation of UniVol assignments from 2007 to 2015 (Source: Author’s Research)**

As a result of learning through experience and fine-tuning, UniVol volunteers have been assigned to volunteer projects that include more general skills-based assignments in administration, social media and communications, and monitoring and evaluation, to roles that are tailored to the unique skills-sets that they hold. These skills are evident through educational-based achievements in areas such as environmental, educational, statistics and planning-based learning, to external skills that are developed through their vocational experiences or external interests, such as sports coaching, agricultural and tourism-related interests. Figure 6.2 shows that over the history of the programme, assignments have generally been designed to facilitate the broader skills-sets that UniVols can provide. Such roles fit closely within the three major sectoral focuses that VSA target through their volunteering outputs, namely; economic growth, public service and social welfare. Roles that focus on economic growth are shown to have become more frequent in recent volunteering assignments. This can be attributed to a number of reasons, including the demands on VSA by its main funder, MFAT, to approach volunteering in a certain way, as

well as the demands from partner organisations for assistance in this area. These points are expressed in the quotation below;

“I did a little bit of development at university and you sort of think, oh it’s these projects and we are out there helping people in the villages and it’s all things like that. Then they come to an office... and they are just doing Excel and filing for an organisation, and it’s like oh, ok is this development that I am doing because it just looks like an office job... The reality is that if they stay in New Zealand, they are probably doing low-level administration jobs as well, so in terms of development, it’s great that they are getting that in-country experience, what it’s like to live in Samoa, Tonga, wherever”

*So have such roles like that become more common now that MFAT has shifted its focus towards that style of economic development?*

“Possibly. I think it’s also partly because programme managers have found it difficult to find volunteer roles at that skill or experience level... The kinds of stuff that partners need that someone with no specific training or experience can do, tend to fall under the category of admin and that’s just where the assignments have been. But then when we do get someone who’s a bit older with specific experience, we can often find them something and they can contribute in quite a meaningful specific way.” KI 054

Dependent on the nature of the local placements offered, UniVol assignments are generally established in a manner that aims to provide the volunteer with the opportunity to work with a direct counterpart or individual within the partner organisation. This can vary significantly, however, depending on the situation of the partner organisation when the UniVol volunteer arrives, and the needs of the organisation at the time. As Chapter Four explains, VSA formulates comprehensive assignment descriptions and objectives that are agreed upon by the partner organisations and in-country VSA staff, closely related to the areas of need for the partner organisations. This, however, does not necessarily dictate the type of work undertaken by the volunteer if their skills-sets are discovered to be more appropriate to help in other roles within the partner organisation during their assignment. It can, therefore, be difficult to quantify assignment outputs when the roles that youth volunteer’s deliver can be ever-changing. This is a point made by academics who critique ideas of ‘new managerialism’, and the inflexibility that such neoliberal processes exhibit when they quantify output (Georgeou, 2012; Griffiths, 2014b; Baillie Smith *et al*, 2016). This is why this chapter, and indeed the premise of RQ #1, will explore the common strengths and weaknesses of the programme across a variety of different UniVol assignments. The variety of volunteer roles that youth can fulfil, and the wide-ranging impact that they can achieve will be evident within subsequent discussion.

## **6.3 The perceived value of the UniVol programme**

When looking at the UniVol programme in its entirety, there are a number of recurring factors that are linked to producing successful outcomes for volunteers. These outcomes are evident not only in the general assignment objectives that are administered, but in other facets of the volunteer experience outside of the workplace environment, such as the more informal and social aspects of volunteer life. Successes have occurred at numerous levels, within social relations at the individual level (explored in detail in Chapter Nine), to wider societal groups, NGO related projects in-country, expatriate and volunteer communities, and among staff within volunteer workplaces. Certain positive elements also exemplify the unique assets that are commonly found within younger volunteers. These distinctive attributes and abilities that younger volunteers possess, as compared with regular, older volunteers, highlight where youth can be effective within IDV. The major differences between younger and older volunteers will show how younger volunteers can create different opportunities for capacity building and organisational progress. This analysis will view youth volunteering from a perspective that differs from common research agendas in this area, centred on motivations and the types of roles youth fill (see Rehberg, 2005; Holdsworth, 2010; Fox *et al*, 2010; Pan, 2012; Tiessen, 2012). This section will frame these successes and niche attributes through the perspectives of the volunteers, before incorporating the perspectives from VSA in-country staff and from staff at VSA headquarters, who administer the overall programmes.

### **6.3.1 Developing basic skills-sets**

One of the common areas that UniVol volunteers have experienced success in when working with colleagues in their partner organisations, as well as with individuals outside of their specific working environments, relates to the capacity developed in general computer-based and written-based skills-sets. Whilst some assignments are specifically tailored to working in computer-related monitoring and evaluation and administrative roles, which require computer training by staff and a high level of comprehension on the part of the volunteer, the majority of other organisations that work outside of this area are adapting to technology-based systems. For the UniVol volunteers, who have been brought up in this technological era, general computer-based skills are developed through their educational and social experiences when living and interacting within society in New Zealand, a society like most developed nations that has long since incorporated technology into a variety of aspects that

influence daily life. These skills may not be as strong in older volunteers, owing to the generational gap.

Strong written skills and further computer-based skills are developed among UniVol volunteers as they continue their education from the secondary to the tertiary level, constantly evolving as they encounter different educational requirements. One of the main criticisms of youth volunteers is the lack of specific skills that they can offer host communities, as opposed to their older counterparts who generally possess more life and work experience (Tyler and Walter, 2006; Devereux, 2008; Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Butcher and Smith, 2015). Whilst this may be the case for specific assignments that do require unique skills-sets and a high level of experience, there are situations where partner organisations require volunteers to build capacity more generally. This is evident among smaller organisations in developing nations that are newly formed, as well as among organisations based in poorer communities who have not had as much exposure to technology.

For local staff, who may not have had access to the educational experiences awarded to others, adjusting to new technologies, upskilling on basic written skills, or working in an unfamiliar language can be challenging. These are areas that UniVols, stressed in the quotations below, are able to contribute toward within or outside of their direct assignment objectives. Administering what is deemed as ‘basic’ skills sets may not be as high a priority for regular volunteers or development professionals involved in specialised projects, owing to their often concentrated focus on specific assignments and their general lack of flexibility in contributing outside of their main tasks. Basic computer skills, such as setting up email addresses, helping organisations connect to social media, and teaching colleagues and friends how to operate programmes and software; to written skills such as report writing, proof reading, and developing promotional material for the organisation or helping individuals with CV’s, have been areas that a majority of UniVols have highlighted when asked what they believe they were able to achieve when volunteering.

“Immediately after my assignment, I thought I did some really great things. When I was more reflective on it though I was like hmmm. Like I put in this reporting system and thought it was fantastic, then the more I thought about it I thought oh it probably didn’t fit that well with how people worked and it was too much like how I would like to do a system. But I think very basic things like doing basic computer skills, budgeting. I think the most effective things was when you passed on those skills and you had a strong relationship with the people and it stuck. I went back to Santo [Vanuatu]... a couple of years later, and

I think those are the things that stuck, and the other things dropped off.” KI 051, Focus Group 1 – Vanuatu

“So the CEO and I saw there was quite a need for that. Staff needed to know how to use a computer because they were just using a telephone and paper, that was it. So I taught them basic excel, word and emailing. I didn’t want to overwhelm them with other stuff. So yeah a majority of the time I was teaching IT skills and just being there for the staff to answer any questions that they had when they got stuck on the computer. When I left, the staff were quite capable of using computers and could do their jobs better. It allowed the staff to move up into positions with more responsibility.” KI 028 – Samoa

In certain situations, the volunteers themselves can be quite unaware of the value of their general skills. This is owed to the fact that such skills have become second nature to UniVols, who have grown up with technology interwoven into their daily livelihoods. Other links can be attributed to the images of development that UniVols form through their university studies, when they often explore larger, ambitious projects that impact on a wider audience. The smaller and less glamorous aspects of development that most UniVols are exposed to on assignment may be considered less important to the volunteer in some cases, but are still nonetheless valuable to the partner organisations and individuals who work with volunteers. Certain UniVol volunteers, however, have been able to reflect on their experiences over time, seeing the merits in delivering what they might have considered to be very basic skills during their assignments. This is illustrated in the quotation below;

“At the end of the year, I didn’t feel like I had achieved much, and I could see that the six peer educators that I worked with were definitely running the peer education by themselves, but for me it seemed like such a basic programme that it didn’t seem like such a big deal. But when I went back the next year and saw what a well-oiled machine they were, it did feel like we had had a lot of success. They were writing their own basic reports and stuff to the head office, and just knowing how to do that without any assistance, and setting their own budgets and timetables for the month and stuff, they wouldn’t have even known what a budget was before I arrived. So their computer skills were more advanced and I guess I did achieve something there.” KI 020 – Vanuatu

This type of capacity building has also been noticed by in-country VSA staff and other VSA volunteers. Their perceptions of the UniVol volunteers they had met in the field and what they had achieved in sharing such skills-sets are exemplified in the quotations below. The value of upskilling staff and community members in computer-based skills and general written skills has been emphasised as an important aspect of the work that VSA delivers. This is a role that UniVol volunteers, in particular, are considered to be effective at,



owing to their flexible work ethic, enthusiasm, and overall high skills-level that they have as being part of the younger generation.

“I think she struggled initially, but I think what she was working towards was the Commonwealth Youth Games that they had here. In the end, I think what she did was do quite a bit of office training and some basic computer skills, and I think she gave them all a certificate when they were competent in whatever. But she is a sporty girl, and she didn’t really enjoy being behind a computer all day, every day, which is what it ended up... In the end I think she would feel that she did do that capacity building and that her role was useful and that she had a good time.” KI 069 – Samoa

“We need younger volunteers, and it’s an interesting thing that whatever skills-set you have, in a place like Smolbag, you are working with people who possibly may not have no skills at all, and just because you happen to know how to use a computer, then you can come and help people at all levels. So there are so many ways that you can actually impart skills, and you don’t even know that you are doing it. Even just speaking English, you can help out. I think it’s very positive, and I have seen young UniVols manage themselves better than older volunteers. So there are advantages to youth, definitely. The energy, and that peer thing.” KI 078, Focus Group 3 – Vanuatu

“Well from a New Zealand angle and you might say oh UniVol, they don’t have experience as they are university volunteers, but from here it’s kind of a higher end of capacity building. Because I have spoken to some of the people who have worked in the past with UniVols, and they think their skills are way way higher than the skills of some of the people they work with. But from a New Zealand angle, it’s like it’s just university volunteers, because they don’t have enough work experience. So that’s what I mean by looking at it at the low end, that it shouldn’t be looked at in that context.” KI 089 – PNG

These general, lower-level skills that UniVols have are also considered within future assignment planning, where in-country programme managers can link UniVols to partner organisations within the regions that VSA operates. Organisations that would benefit from general written, computer, and social media skills-sharing are ideally suited for a younger volunteer with wider skills-sets, who is also enthusiastic and motivated to contribute. This is opposed to regular volunteers who work on more specialised roles, who may not have been as exposed to new technological advancements. Comments made by in-country staff support such notions;

“There are organisations that we are working with which really need UniVol help, and we know that they are fresh out of university and that some of the organisations, most of them need computer skills and communications and IT stuff like that. So that is fresh knowledge that can help most of the organisations that we work with. We work with some that don’t have UniVols, which we think

that can work with next year. There is a new organisation that I am thinking of at the moment that really needs that help.” KI 067 – Samoa

“One thing that a lot of my volunteers end up doing on the side is Excel lessons, because it’s a new programme to a lot of people here. Even computers are new in places. I have one organisation here that only just started using computers last year, and Excel is such an amazing tool that we just take for granted. You use it for everything in New Zealand, but it’s all these little things that you don’t realise you have got. Just being able to research on the internet is a huge skill” KI 076 – Vanuatu

Overall, a considerable number of informants who were volunteers, VSA staff members, or from partner organisations, attested to the positive impact that UniVols had made through their general skills-sets. Crabtree (1998) states that working side-by-side with local people presents a ‘unique vantage point’, to understand each other and benefit from each other’s experiences. Whether such skills were shared in a formal or informal situation in-country, the resounding evidence suggested that a majority of UniVol volunteers were effective in upskilling individuals in basic computer and written-based skills-sets through close interpersonal relationships. UniVols could make an organisational impact in this lower-level capacity building with staff who had limited educational experience or exposure to such skills. These skills may not be considered specialist skills in developed nations, but are skills that individuals and organisations in developing nations can lack if their exposure to the globalised world is limited. These are skills that younger volunteers possess, which can have a valuable influence upon individual and organisational capacity. Outcomes in upskilling and training for individuals can also have meaningful impacts throughout wider communities, when such skills are limited.

### **6.3.2 Knowledge of development studies**

One aspect that has been shown to benefit UniVol volunteers during their experiences is in their basic knowledge of development processes in developing countries. The UniVol programme requires applicants to have taken papers in development studies at undergraduate level as a prerequisite to selection, something that is not required for regular volunteers. Regular volunteers are generally recruited on the basis of their professional skills-sets and assignment fit. They apply for specific roles, as opposed UniVols who apply to join the programme. VSA, as part of its briefing processes, devotes a session to overviewing relevant development discourse, explaining how their aims and agendas in IDV fit into this. Observation of the volunteer briefing in 2015, with a mix with regular and UniVol volunteers, revealed a gap in comprehension and familiarity around development discussion

between the two distinctive groups. This knowledge and understanding around development, therefore, can create a different dynamic concerning how UniVols act and volunteer in host communities.

Knowledge of development concepts, and how aid and volunteering are delivered at different levels, can help reduce the *naïve* stereotyping and marginalisation that younger volunteers are often criticised for in general literature (Simpson, 2005; West, 2011; Georgeou, 2012). Van Goethem *et al* (2012) state that when youth possess a better understanding of moral rights issues, they can develop overarching perspectives that help structure ‘relevant context-specific identities’ where they volunteer. UniVols have the potential to identify and manage the causes and problems that lead to such issues. It provides them with the ability to reflect on the roles they are assigned to and what they represent within the community. Johnston *et al* (2012) emphasise how creating appropriate volunteer assignments is essential in giving ownership to local individuals (also Watts, 2002). The ability of UniVols to encourage this approach to capacity development is evident in the quotation below, showing a link to broader development understanding;

“One of the big points that I took from university, which was reinforced at the VSA briefing, was the transfer of skills and capacity building buzzword. But I feel very strongly about that and I think in the short time... in my initial two months here, you can very quickly see the difference between volunteers who are looking to improve the skills of their counterparts, and volunteers who have just... maybe they initially wanted to do that, but they have just given up and taken the easy route out, which is just to do all of the work themselves... I was very keen to make sure that anything I did, any positive work I put into the department, was alongside my counterpart. So I basically point blank refused to do anything without doing it with my counterpart, so she would be able to pick up those skills, basic things like sending an email and responding to an email; you know I’m not going to do that by myself, I am going to do it with her. So I think that was the big one.” KI 046 – ARB

There is a risk, however, that UniVols can become self-critical of the work they do. The quotations below point to examples where UniVols have become disillusioned with the minor tasks they are required to do. They can also become frustrated with the slower pace that partner organisations operate at, which can be in stark contrast to their most recent university experience. Studying what are regarded as successful, large-scale outcomes in development studies courses, as many university courses do, can create an image of development that may not be attainable or relevant to certain volunteer assignments. The

benefits and positives of this have been pointed out by a VSA staff member in the quotation below, evident across different UniVol assignments;

“I mean quite often with all volunteers and UniVols is that they come across things they see as bad practice in an organisation and they are like woah this person is doing this thing and that is not good development... I think the hardest thing is that if you are a young, idealistic development practitioner who has just finished your degree and you want to go and do some good and want to help people, then you see... there are local people doing bad things too, there are aid organisations doing bad things, and you still... like I like seeing them coming through that and it's good to get a little jaded, but then come through the other side and be passionate... Another advantage of the UniVols, my favourite thing, is that because they are development studies people, it means they get it. Like a lot of the older ones come from a background where they suit the job specs, but development is a specialist type of thinking, and I have loved having the UniVols here so I can discuss with them about development here... They think about things like positionality and culture, and just that social science learning that comes with being a younger person these days, but also a development studies graduate. So I really appreciate that, as it gives me someone to talk about development with, which I don't often have. I learn a lot in seeing them think about issues at work too, which I quite like.” KI 076

UniVols have generally been successful in adjusting and empathising with local customs and cultures in their host communities. Their experiences in development studies, and geography in particular, provides them with the tangible skills to do so, which can positively influence their volunteer experiences. Such results parallel research conducted by Green (2012), who also identifies the enhanced ‘conscientisation’ that postgraduate study gives to volunteers. Knowledge around wider development processes contributes to a deeper understanding of their place in the development relationship (Green, 2012). The following successes relating to flexibility, community interaction and cultural adaptation can also be attributed in part to the development knowledge possessed by UniVols.

### **6.3.3 Flexibility**

The flexible nature of younger volunteers, and their willingness to adapt to changes in the volunteer workplace and in wider social settings, is reinforced as a positive attribute among UniVol volunteers. In regards to the workplace, the inexperience and lack of specific skills that younger volunteers are often criticised for can actually lead to more flexibility, as younger volunteers will involve themselves in a wide range of workplace activities. UniVol participants, and those participants who had worked alongside UniVols in the field, attested to the fact that because of their lack of work experience, UniVols did not hold high standards of workplace functionality and cohesiveness as older volunteers expect. This is explained in

the quotations below. Older volunteers, who generally have years of experience working within functioning workplace systems, can be challenged when adjusting to such change. In certain partner organisations, where the output capacity was lower than western standards, UniVols were argued to be less likely to become disgruntled and complain, committing to the work that was presented to them. Certain UniVols were also acknowledged to involve themselves in work that did not specifically relate to the direct assignment objectives, when partner organisations asked them to do so. This is something that regular volunteers are challenged with, working on tasks that they see as falling outside the specific roles they have been assigned to.

“I remember one of the positives was that I was way more flexible than older volunteers, because I’d never had a proper job before, coming straight from Uni. Working in Vanuatu was actually my first full-time job and so did have way less expectations on how meetings should be run and how people should spend their time. The UniVols were a bit more flexible possibly than some professionals who had much higher expectations on the right way to do things.” KI 016 – Vanuatu

“The two older volunteers we have are very much men who turn up and do their job then go home, whereas myself and the other UniVol are more open to doing things outside of our job description, which meant that we were quite flexible and if we saw something we could follow up on, we had the time to do so. It also meant that we could work with a wide range of people and work across departments, and it meant that whatever knowledge we had or could impart was imparted. So, in regards to UniVols, maybe because we are not so career or professionalised due to the fact that we haven’t got ourselves into a profession yet, means that we are just a bit more open to doing whatever comes our way.” KI 047 – PNG

“I think it is an individual thing, you can have a younger person that might not have a lot of experience, but they are flexible and have a can do attitude. Then you can have an older person who is fixed in their own ways, so that might actually be a block for them in achieving their results, because they have this mind-set that this is the way I have been doing it, so don’t tell me how to suck eggs, so to speak. But you have younger ones who say, oh ok, we can try this and we can try that, so I think it all depends” KI 089 – PNG

The flexibility of volunteers and their ability to adjust to the needs of the partner organisation in-situ can be essential within communities and countries where systems are vulnerable to swift change. More often than not, the assignment descriptions that are established for volunteer assignments may no longer be a high priority for the partner organisation by the time the volunteer actually arrives in-country. Being able to adapt to this, and having the enthusiasm to become immersed within other tasks, ensures that if situations

change then the volunteer can still contribute. Flexibility within social settings is also an important part of the volunteer experience. Expressing a desire to be involved in different events and meeting various groups and individuals allows volunteers to extend their social networks. This can create an opportunity for the volunteer to have further reach in the community and build additional capacity in other areas. UniVols are more inclined to involve themselves in activities outside of working hours and the workplace as a whole (an aspect discussed later), owing to their general enthusiasm and sociable nature. Such experiences can also translate to a more committed, empowered and socially responsible volunteer on return from assignment (Astin *et al*, 1999). Older volunteers, in comparison, are more likely to establish distinct divides between their volunteer work and their social lives. Again, this can relate to work experience, where younger volunteers are less likely to challenge the commitment to events outside of their working hours because of their lack of familiarity with workplace systems. In general, however, this heightened enthusiasm to explore the host community, as well as their flexible approach in the activities and groups that one associates with, is a distinctly positive aspect of younger IDV volunteering.

“Yeah I couldn’t say that favouring older more skilled people is a negative, I think there are lots of benefits to taking that approach, but me being a younger person and therefore not having as recognised a set of skills to impart to anyone else meant that my assignment was much more open, and I think that it allows a volunteer, being skilled or otherwise, to be a lot more responsive to the demands, wants and needs of the local community. That is in ways that highly skilled, professionalised volunteers aren’t able to react to.” KI 042 – Solomon Islands

“Having met the seven UniVols, [I] thought that they offered entirely new skill-sets. They had a sense of enquiry about them, were open to all experiences that faced them, and were more likely to engage socially in all aspects of their work and life on placement. They were also willing to take on the language, which was very important to do so as it gave more connection and trust to the host community.” KI 058 – ARB

Flexible working and lifestyle approaches, combined with the overt enthusiasm and motivation that many younger volunteers bring to their assignments, can create a substantially different experience for partner organisations (Watts, 2002; Wijeyesekera, 2011). This is reinforced in the above quotations. In the wider community, the reach of the volunteer can be extended to other groups and individuals through an enthusiastic and flexible approach. Different societal groups can become connected to other social networks when the volunteer extends their personal networks, creating opportunities for other community members not directly linked to partner organisations (see Chapter Nine for

further detail). These opportunities may not be fostered among introverted regular volunteers, who may not lead the same active social lives as their younger counterparts and build the number of relationships that youth tend to do.

#### **6.3.4 Community interaction**

Another positive aspect to the UniVol programme was the willingness among volunteers to become involved in aspects of local life outside of their direct assignment objectives. In addition to the direct assignment objectives that are detailed in UniVol roles, a number of volunteers expressed their participation in the wider community. Involvement within various cultural and charitable events, connecting with local sports clubs, and working with other NGOs based in the regions where UniVols were based, were some of the various links expressed by UniVols. These are exemplified in the statements below;

“Up at the university where we were living on the campus, I played netball with the university girls team, which was quite fun. I also helped them out with making the uniforms and stuff like that.” KI 005 – PNG

“That was the highlight really. You have your assignment and you are working with your counterpart and things like that, but there are a lot of other interactions that you build up and I have always been a big sportsman, so I got involved with the local football team to begin with. Just a little bit as I’m not that good at football, but then half way through the assignment, some of the Australian guys in the community tried to set up a local rugby league team... They knew that I was into sports and they asked me to come along and I found it really ad hoc and unstructured, so I put a bit of structure into it, then it moved to me being the coach and I taught them a few skills. Then we managed to get some local sponsorship and then the team was travelling from Santo to Vila to play and they did really well, and it was just a huge highlight working with the guys... to push them and them wanting to be pushed to get to the stage we got.” KI 001 – Vanuatu

“Because I was based at the youth centre, and there was all sort of stuff happening there – it was like a drop-in centre for young and old people – I would get invited to a lot of things in the weekends, music stuff and festivals.” KI 020 – Vanuatu

Extended involvement in groups and events outside of work enabled UniVols to extend their social connections within their local host communities. This enabled volunteers to limit the isolation and boredom factors outside of the workplace environment, which can be an issue for volunteers who are living in foreign environments. This also provided volunteers with an opportunity to extend not only their own social networks, but to establish networks for the partner organisations that they were volunteering with, assisting with

organisational capacity and opportunity. The quotations below emphasise the opportunities that were created for UniVols as they became further integrated into the community;

“I guess because the youth centre brought in so many people from the community, which was for me my main connection with the community, because there were so many young people from all around, we would go to stuff outside of work. But it was normally connected to work. There would be a hip hop concert or something like that... Yeah, or otherwise organisations who worked with the youth centre, so we met all of our ni-Vanuatu friends in that way pretty much.” KI 051

“Yeah people who knew people at the youth centre, there were a lot of connections through it like Save the Children, other organisations that were similar, yeah, that’s how we met a lot of people.” KI 003, Focus Group 1 – Vanuatu

“One of the things I think that was a lasting positive was that I invited the Mothers Union ladies to the conservation area, so that they could see what it was and see turtles hatching, and that built a lot of passion for what could be achieved there. So that’s one thing that I guess, the internal energy that I built within the Mothers Union. In the conservation group, I think it introduced a lot of accountability, because that conservation group wasn’t well understood by the communities. What they were doing wasn’t well communicated to the communities that they were representing. So bringing the Mothers Union out there meant that the communities themselves got a bit of an insight as to what was happening there, and shone a bit of light on the accountability of the activities of the board of management” KI 042 – Solomon Islands

The ability of UniVol volunteers to further their social connections can produce advantageous outcomes for both themselves and their partner organisations. Jones (2005: 96) strongly advocates for the value of such cross-cultural interaction, arguing that it “can be significant and much greater than has been thus far explored”. For those participants who were involved in partner organisations and other community organisations not directly associated with VSA, they also remarked on the involvement that certain UniVol volunteers had in other events outside of their specific assignment directives.

“One UniVol... she looked for other opportunities to keep herself busy, and she was involved in this UN film roadshow, so she went and joined them to travel around other different areas to show films on human rights to the communities” KI 093 – ARB

The first time I worked alongside a UniVol was 2011 maybe. I set up a charitable organisation to work with youth using music as a means for development for youth. So I ran a rehearsal studio with modern instruments and we set up a festival once a year and did little events in between. So we had two UniVols at the time... who were working at the youth centre and because the



studio was set up by the youth centre, we worked a lot together on festivals.” KI  
072 – Vanuatu

This ability to connect with individuals and groups outside of the assignment objectives in a variety of different societal areas, extends the reach that younger volunteers can make in their respective communities. Not only does this impact on the individual volunteer, positively influencing their volunteering experience, but it also provides the opportunity for further capacity building, allowing younger volunteers to share their general skills and empower local communities through participation (see Picken and Lewis, 2015). This can be through formal workplace skills, or skills used in extramural achievements in sports, music and cultural interests, adding another dimension to the volunteer experience. For youth, these informal settings provide a relaxed environment that can enable the volunteer to interact in a manner that does not require specific work and life experiences that larger-scale assignments or development professionals require. However, the environment can still be conducive to capacity building and fostering skills exchanges for specific individuals or groups (see Howard and Burns, 2015; Schech *et al*, 2015). This can differ from regular volunteers who may build social connections. For many UniVols, and youth in general, being involved in extra activities or leading active social lives is common, making it easier for younger volunteers to immerse themselves in social settings. Further cultural understanding and relationship-building can also be a by-product of this willingness to be socially active, as a passion and interest for the specific event is high, owing to the intentional commitment that they have made to be included. The value of relationships and connectivity are critical aspects of this research, which will be discussed extensively in later chapters. This has been a common trend in UniVol assignments and has positively contributed to the impact that volunteers have made in the communities where they have worked.

### **6.3.5 Cultural adaptation**

Another successful element to the UniVol programme has been the ability of volunteers to adapt quickly to the different cultural settings in which they are working, once they have initially settled into their new environments. Connected to a willingness to immerse oneself in the local community and general enthusiasm, the ability to adapt quickly to different cultural and societal scenarios has enabled UniVols to not only enhance their own experiences, but to build larger social networks and achieve success within their workplace environments. One of the major obstacles to volunteering in general is the lifestyle

adjustment that is required by volunteers, living and working in communities that require vastly different livelihood protocols. This presents new challenges in the way work is carried out, how engagement is made in social settings, alongside the more obvious barriers including language, custom, and environment. These barriers can be remarkably different to the conditions that the volunteer is used to in their own country.

Different political, cultural, historical and social factors have the ability to constrain volunteers in building relationships (Schech *et al*, 2015). A common trend within the collected data were the comments made around the ability of younger UniVols in general to adapt to the different environments in which they were placed, positively influencing the experiences of all stakeholders involved in volunteer placement. Some volunteers are able to adapt to certain cultures more effectively than others, owing to the complexity of certain languages, the barriers in terms of assignment fit, the functionality of the workplace, and the different nature of assignment objectives. UniVols, however, generally possess an inherent ability to learn quickly, owing to their educational experiences and general desire to acquire knowledge. Their experience in development studies can also help in adjusting to new situations, due to the heightened cultural sensitivity and development understanding that they have gained through tertiary education. These themes are evident among the perspectives expressed by UniVols in the quotations below. As a result, this heightened cultural adaptation proved successful in allowing volunteers to achieve results in their partner organisations, and become more connected to the communities in which they worked and lived.

“It’s island time and you have to slow down to their level of operation, and that relates to both personal growth and work growth. You have to learn how to work in that environment, but personally you have to overcome so many cultural challenges that you don’t really get in New Zealand. Becoming more aware of other cultures and understanding, getting another understanding of world views from our own here in New Zealand. Youth the same age as me in Blacksands [a suburb in Port Vila] have a completely different understanding of the world as I do. These youth have sort of lived in these communities all of their lives and have never travelled outside of Vanuatu, and you know they are happy and they are vibrant youth, really talented in their own way, and coming from my side of New Zealand where we have quite expansive world views and ideas, it’s quite interesting to see how someone whose world is quite small, but can still be really vibrant and talented, yeah.” KI 014 – Vanuatu

“I think younger volunteers are a little more adaptable, and probably have fewer expectations than older volunteers. Not to say that older volunteers are too cynical about it, but we haven’t been in the workforce for long, so we don’t have a perception of what it might be like. It was a lot slower and I was OK with that,

because I knew to build those relationships it has to be a bit slower, and eventually things did happen, but I think we are a little bit more adaptable and understanding, we don't expect that it's going to happen straight away and things are going to be like they are in NZ or wherever the volunteer is from... Whether that is just culture or job-related, it's just easier for us. We wanted to be in the community a lot more than the older volunteers, and there was a big ex-pat community where we lived, and it was easy to fall into that, but we kind of wanted to keep a good line between the communities we wanted to be a part of... Also, just challenging the stereotype of a volunteer was also quite cool, like going out to rural communities and not being afraid to sleep on the ground and get dirty, things like that. It sounds silly, but things like that they really appreciated. Learning the language was a big thing which really helped challenge that also." KI 040 – PNG

The ability to adapt to local cultures and customs is considered to be an important aspect of UniVol placements, building trust and forming connections with local individuals and communities. For UniVols, who are generally placed on assignments approximately ten months in length, the ability to successfully adjust to local lifestyles is essential in achieving objectives with partner organisations, owing to the length of time spent in-country (discussed in detail later). This can positively impact on the outcomes for both VSA and the host community, opening opportunities for UniVols and the individuals they meet outside of their assignment scope. Understanding cultural traits and respecting the livelihoods that locals hold can enable a more trusting understanding to form. This can make the volunteer more welcome in-community, leading to community inclusion and involvement. Picking up local languages was especially noted in the quotations below as a skill that younger volunteers possessed, compared with their older counterparts, which furthered their community immersion;

"With our recent volunteers, they are making really good relationships. Especially within their age groups so they are really making those good connections and providing positive results in the organisations and around the community they are living in. You know, I don't know because maybe in the long run in the beginning there may be some shy volunteers, but they will easily adapt after 4 to 5 weeks. UniVols are able to build confidence in themselves to longer they are here, which is really good." KI 067 – Samoa

"Heaps. I mean first thing, *Bislama*. The UniVols can learn it in a week, but the older ones, like I have some in their sixties who just try so hard but can't learn a new language. But the young ones, pretty much every one of them have just picked it up so quickly. It opens a lot of doors and creates trust. Like if you speak their language, they will trust you more, and it's huge... And integrating culturally too, young people are good at that and are open minded about the culture and willing to talk to people and make friends, and it's easier too because for younger people, even for younger Ni-Vanuatu, they are more confident with

ex-pats, and for older people it's really hard to make friends here and it's a big issue." KI 076 – Vanuatu

Overall, this ability to understand and adapt within the host community quickly can contribute towards positive volunteer assignments. For UniVols, and younger volunteers in general, this is a common trait they have, which can significantly benefit their volunteering experiences. Opportunities can extend through cultural immersion and empathy, creating stronger links and forging trust between individuals. This aspect to youth volunteering will be discussed at length in the later chapters of this thesis. Not only is it beneficial for the volunteer, but it can create more successful outcomes for the volunteer-sending organisation, for partner organisations and for community individuals. This reveals how advantageous cultural immersion and social skills are in capacity building and local-level volunteer exchanges, and how younger volunteers can utilise such skills to make credible impact.

#### **6.3.6 Creating a positive image of New Zealanders**

Another interesting facet of the UniVol programme is the generally positive perception of the volunteers, which is created through volunteer interaction. Even in situations where assignments have not been as successful as others in terms of assignment objectives, the overall perception of the UniVol volunteers and the way they carry themselves in the host communities is resoundingly positive. One participant reveals in the quotation below as to how they were able to connect with individuals and break down barriers through their behavioural traits within local communities. Barriers are formed through the general perception of volunteers arriving to developing communities from the global north. Ideas around colonial domination, economic wealth and power that have been discussed at length in relation to the north-to-south volunteering binary and in wider development theory (Kapoor, 2008; McEwan, 2009; Tiessen and Heron, 2012; Hopkins, 2015; Turner, 2015). These boundaries are argued to exist in certain youth volunteering forms, such as gap year travel and within certain voluntourism projects, which can tarnish the image of younger volunteers in general. The UniVol participant below discusses how they were able to break down the underlying perceptions that were formed about them before they arrived in-country, by expressing an interest in the cultures and customs of the local community and by building relationships with individuals. Preconceived host perceptions are visibly clearer in countries that have experienced strong subjugation by countries in the global north, as well as in countries where racism and oppression are a significant part of their history and current environment.

“I think just becoming friends with them, like I remember one of my colleagues, the previous VSA UniVol was the first white person that he had had a conversation with, so I was his second white friend, which just seemed remarkable to me when I figured this out. Because we were hanging out every day and joking and laughing, and he was quite shy and reserved, and that made me realise how important it was for me to represent the white population, or white people everywhere, where he has grown up in South Africa which is so racist and has such massive fault lines between black and white. He grew up in King William’s Town, and never had any kind of interactions with white people until his mid-twenties, just was phenomenal. So I felt like I could just sort of breach those gaps a bit and even though I was from New Zealand, I felt like I could help someone like him to at least think that not all white people are racist, and just be a little more confident in reaching out to white people. I felt that a lot in my interactions... I was quite deliberate in talking to Blacks. Like I would catch the taxi vans around East London and things like that. I remember one time when the young guy who sits in the doorway and yells out, he kept looking me because I was in the back of the van, and when I got out, he just stopped me and put his hand on my arm and said God Bless you, and I was just so touched. I was like man he’s probably never had a white person in his van before and he thought it was so amazing that I was riding in it. Those little things to me, and just having a laugh with random black people in the street, I felt like I was doing a tiny little bit to get South Africa closer together. And particularly in my close friendships with my colleagues, when I realised that they had had very few interactions with white people, I kind of felt like I could open their minds a little bit more to the white population and have a little more hope for South Africa and that kind of thing. That was my most tangible impact on South Africa almost, because it felt like I was doing that every day. Like I would go into the supermarket and try out a little bit of Xhosa with people and stuff, and people just found it so shocking and I felt like I could challenge people on a daily basis to just think differently about race, and that was very fulfilling.” KI037 – South Africa

Although this quotation represents an extreme example of a situation where racial issues are still prevalent in this particular host society, it does exemplify the importance of attitude within the volunteer, as well as the strengths of community connection. This discussion will be detailed further in Chapter Nine, in relation to the value of local relationships and social capital. In general, the attitudes towards New Zealanders in the nations where VSA send their volunteers are overwhelmingly positive. This is especially the case in the Pacific region, where VSA has focused its activities in the last five years, owing to the strong political ties and migratory patterns in the region (Fraenkel, 2012). The work that all VSA volunteers have delivered has supported this image in host communities. Such perceptions are further strengthened, however, through the bonds that volunteers can establish in certain communities. For younger volunteers, their ability to connect with individuals and their genuine respect and empathy for local cultures strengthens their

positive perception and what they represent. This is enhanced when trust is built between individuals.

### **6.3.7 Volunteering with hosts who are similar in age**

The final common positive aspect of the UniVol programme that was expressed by UniVols and VSA staff is in relation to the youthful demographics that make up the host communities where UniVols volunteer. The entire global population has experienced phenomenal growth from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, driven by developing countries that have more than four times the population growth rates than developed nations (Potter *et al*, 2008). Populations in developing countries are significantly younger in relation to more developed nations. Issues related to life expectancy, the availability of medical technologies, limited access to healthcare and maternity, proneness to disease, and access to food and water, also contribute towards youthful societies (see Willis, 2011).

**Table 6.1: Population percentages below 24 in UniVol host nations**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Percentage of Population aged between 0-24 in 2015</b>
<b>Africa</b>	
Tanzania	64.4
South Africa	48.6
<b>Asia</b>	
Cambodia	52.2
Timor-Leste	62.2
<b>Pacific Islands</b>	
Papua New Guinea	56.9
Solomon Islands	59.2
Vanuatu	54.9
Samoa	56.7
Tonga	56.6
New Zealand	34.2

**(Source: Adapted from United Nations Population Division, 2015)**

Demographics do vary across countries in Southern Africa, South East Asia, and in the Pacific where UniVols have volunteered. They are, however, predominantly more youthful in comparison to New Zealand (see Table 6.1). For younger volunteers, working in IDV means that the probability of working and meeting individuals in similar age groups is high. UniVols note in the quotations below that working alongside colleagues of a similar age can help to build rapport and collegiality, as they can relate to one another more easily. Such ideas are reinforced by Haski-Leventhal *et al's* (2008) study, which reveals how younger volunteers were able to promote social inclusion and trustworthiness among

individuals who were of a similar age. This is not to argue that older volunteers are unable to build relationships, however, as more office-based and government-related assignments in developing countries generally have older employees. Coupled with this are cultural elements where age and experience are respected in many cultures where VSA volunteers are sent. Common themes have emerged in the research data, however, that suggest parity in age has allowed UniVols to increase their social networks, build closer relationships with individuals, and feel more comfortable working in partner organisations where they can relate and interact with colleagues of similar age.

“Yeah, I think especially in my workplace it was quite a young workforce there, so it was really good to be able to create those relationships with the staff there that would have been the main positive there... I guess Timor is such a young country that it was really cool to just walk around and you could just relate to everyone there. Their biggest issues there at the moment are to do with youth violence and things like that, so having that younger perspective was good” KI 007 – Timor Leste

“I guess being able to relate to the young people that were coming into the youth centre, you became friends with them and the nature of Wan Smolbag is that a lot of people you are dealing with are young, between 13 and 25 or so... When you are based in a youth centre, there is an advantage to being young because the young people are embarrassed to come and ask for help, but they can relate to you so you are more approachable basically. One of the things I did do while I was there, I guess it was kind of like a new programme that was set up as the following volunteers kept doing that, was basically helping people find employment. So we ran workshops on writing CVs and stuff like that. I don’t reckon they would have gone to an older person to help them with that kind of thing because they are ashamed to do so.” KI 020 – Vanuatu

This can lead to opportunities for capacity building, as shown in the above quotation, for local individuals who are able to make connections with the volunteer. In the more informal settings outside of the workplace, this is especially poignant, and an important factor relating to the ability of younger volunteers to be more engaged in the host communities. For older volunteers, these informal connections are much more difficult to achieve as age-related barriers inhibit their ability to relate and socialise with younger groups. The benefits of youth can be an essential element to creating those individual relationships that this thesis argues is of high importance to IDV.

## **6.4 Challenges within the UniVol programme**

Along with the successes that have been identified in the UniVol programme, there are three issues that have been raised by UniVol volunteers and VSA staff. The nature of IDV

explicitly implies that there are intrinsic issues within the partner organisations and communities that volunteers work with, some which are not as easily addressed as others (Fee and Gray, 2011; Georgeou, 2012; Tomazos and Butler, 2012). These can be beyond the scope of the volunteer in certain cases. For example, embedded forms of corruption, abuse and violence can place the volunteer in a compromising situation when they are exposed to it. To continue addressing RQ #1, this section will now discuss the common challenges around UniVol assignments that can be mitigated to a certain extent, through careful planning and communication. Evident at various levels, these challenges may not only concern the attributes of the volunteers themselves, but with how programmes are established and the organisational understanding between VSA and its partner organisations. This section will consider the perspectives of UniVol volunteers, as well as VSA staff and certain host community members, to explain how these issues have affected assignments and why they are important to consider in the wider youth volunteer context. Tiessen and Heron (2012) note that when youth can recognise the negative aspects associated with their volunteering, then discussion around actual achievements can be clearer. This can be multiplied when numerous stakeholders are included and compared.

#### **6.4.1 Effective communication and understanding**

One of the more significant factors that limit the achievement of UniVol volunteers is through the creation of assignments that lack careful consideration and communication between the volunteer sending organisation and the partner organisation. As mentioned before, UniVols often offer a broad set of general skills alongside their individually-specific abilities, which can assist organisations in host communities effectively if their capabilities are understood and supported. Participants explain in the quotations below that when their roles and skills are misunderstood, then the overall outcomes can be minimal for all stakeholders involved. Turner (2015) alludes to how reliant volunteers can be on successful partnerships that are formed in particular programmes, and how valuable participation and understanding are between sending organisations and partner organisations to enabled relationships to form.

The quotations from UniVols below suggest that a lack of understanding around their assignments became clear as their volunteering experiences began, when specific situations made it difficult for them to contribute. The negative outcomes that result from this are often directed toward the volunteer themselves, judging the overall failure of assignments from a position that questions youth capability (Tiessen and Heron, 2012; Lough and Allum, 2013;



Hopkins *et al*, 2015). There are, however, additional aspects to consider. From a sending organisation's point-of-view, issues can also relate to assignments that may have been rushed in their establishment, lacking clarity and careful planning. Issue also arise in the continued placement of volunteers into roles that have failed, or have perhaps become limited in what they can achieve owing to the work provided by previous volunteers. These factors are clear throughout all quotations presented in this section. From a volunteer's perspective, this can limit what they are able to achieve and create a negative perception of the overall assignment worth.

"I believed I achieved very little. When I arrived at VSA, it was all pretty hectic... and that meant that the 'kinks' in my assignment weren't necessarily sort of identified when they probably should have been. So when I arrived, a teacher had been sort of employed there. So she ended up taking lessons pretty much the entire time the kids weren't at school. So it made my role pretty much redundant from the moment I got there. So VSA, the in-country manager, had to scramble a bit for what I was then going to do... It was all just a bit of a disaster of an organisation in some ways, so I don't feel that I was necessarily effective. But in saying that, they probably did need something done, I don't know if I got listened to though." KI 034 – Cambodia

"The biggest challenge was that I didn't feel like I was supported by VSA, and I felt like I had been thrown into a situation where they should have known better. It was like they knew that it was going to be shit, but they didn't tell me or prepare me much for it. The year before me, there was another volunteer in the programme, and it didn't go too well, not horribly though. What happened was that she got started and they threw her in the deep end so she battled for months, but she just stuck with it doing all the PA stuff that I had to do. She did do some cool stuff in between that, but by the time she got to the end, she told VSA that and said that she didn't think another volunteer should go there... I left because they didn't need a volunteer. I was basically just a PA and spent a lot of time sitting around and I wasn't given any work to do." KI 052 – Tonga

In terms of the partner organisation, collective issues have been expressed by participants when volunteers are accepted and have no direct counterpart or staff to work alongside. Lough (2011) identifies the challenges that occur when goals may not be mutually shared and volunteers cannot engage in reciprocal activities. Other common issues transpire when the organisation is dysfunctional from an economic or administrative sense, and are either not willing, or in a position, to provide the volunteer with the opportunity to work toward the assignment objectives or the capacity building of staff in general. This is expressed in the two quotations below. Challenges can emerge for younger volunteers when they try to find their position within the organisation, and in trying to deliver positive contributions.

“I was in the division of media and communications. It was a small office when I got there. There was no one assigned to work on records management or archives... It was kind of unusual and when I got there, there wasn't much happening. The idea was, in the absence of having a direct counterpart, to work across the office to help get the media and communications file system going. In theory, that wasn't an issue for some things. To build records management and get a file system was fine. It was an issue when thinking about going forward. Who was going to keep it all going forward and work on it when we left.” KI 011 – ARB

“I mean my counterpart is fantastic, so in terms of working challenges, it's basically just money. The director of tourism, who I am accountable to, as per VSA's description, never shows up. He is currently on a six week leave, but for nine months, I have maybe seen him for seven of those days. He works from somewhere else, basically just taking his cheque and not doing a whole lot. So I mean I got on with the job without him, but it's extremely frustrating to be a part of that sort of system. It takes a while to get over that sort of thing. But I personally wasn't too bothered about it because I can do my volunteering without having him here. But to then be an input to a system where that's going on, it can be tough, and personally it was hard to see my counterpart turning up every day and trying to do her job without any real direction. That's where the director is supposed to come in, but so, yeah, it's that and money that I'm unable to do anything.” KI 046 – ARB

When communication is lacking, the skills that a younger volunteer offers can sometimes be misinterpreted by partner organisation. As a result, assignments can be set up that are either beyond their capabilities, or place the volunteer in a role where they feel that they are just regular employees, working in a position that could otherwise be carried out by a local. Both of these aspects are expressed in the quotations below, where UniVols have found the roles they are fulfilling to be either too complex in nature, or within the capabilities of local employees. Whilst this may be a need for the partner organisation, it can be a disheartening experience for the volunteer and limit the aims of the overall assignment. Capacity building and sustainability in such circumstances are almost non-existent in relation to the direct assignment objectives that UniVols are asked to deliver. The partner organisation can therefore be at a disadvantage at the end of assignment, as they can be left with a gap in their organisation that was taken by a volunteer (Johnston *et al*, 2012).

“I have got things to do, but it's probably not particularly challenging stuff. So what you see me doing here today would be a typical kind of day for me, which is like recording books that have been donated, and all the stuff on my desk is photocopying that the teachers have brought me to do, and typing and some stuff for the teachers. So mostly kind of that and not so much stuff that uses my background or qualifications, but I think it's just because its understaffed here in terms of the office staff and the administration, so it's kind of the immediate

need to keep the work of the school ticking along. When I have got to work on things like funding reports, I have really enjoyed it and it's been great, but that's probably just quite a small part of the role. It was disappointing when I first arrived definitely, because I spent the first month or two just primarily only photocopying... Once you settle in and kind of just get to thinking that oh the most important thing is that you are doing what your partner organisation actually needs at the time you know... if that is important and what they really need, then you are doing something useful so it's OK." KI 049 – Samoa

"I kind of feel in general that if someone came in who was trained in archives or record management, they would be able to fulfil the assignment objectives and actually get the archives up to the next level. I don't think it's really a good assignment for UniVols because we can contribute in many different ways, but I don't think we can actually give the office what it needs... Archives is very specified, and I have learnt heaps about it this year... but with the archives-specific stuff I feel like I have been more just contributing with computer skills and organisational things. Like I haven't done much on the government-wide records management system, because I just don't understand it." KI 099 – ARB

These challenges within the establishment of volunteer assignments are noted by VSA staff in the discussion below to potentially occur to volunteers of any age, especially if the partner organisations do not, or are unable to, provide the adequate structures as agreed upon when the assignments are established. These participants have acknowledged, however, that younger volunteers can perhaps be more susceptible to such instances than older volunteers, as they may lack the confidence, initiative, and the respect to try and suggest changes in the workplace. Staff may attempt to prompt the partner organisation and provide support to the volunteer, or review previous assignments to assess whether the relationship is appropriate to continue in the following year.

"Partly it comes down I think to the individual, how much initiative and drive they have and the level of creativity and ability to see the gaps and opportunities where they exist, then conceive of ways they may approach that type of work. Part of it is about the individual that we send, then part of it is about the organisation and how well they look after them, guide them, direct them and provide them with opportunities. I would probably lean on the side of it being more about the individual than the organisation itself... [But] when it comes to UniVols, it's even more important that we have a certain level of confidence that they can support them. So we pulled out of Tonga last year, just because of the experience we had with partner organisations wasn't good. They weren't able to provide that level of assistance and there were a few assignments with UniVols that didn't go very well... Occasionally, I might be involved in just trying to encourage the partner organisation to give them some interesting work to be involved in so that they can have a clear idea of where they are going and what they are meant to be doing..." KI 057

“Probably one of the major challenges was that some of them felt like they weren’t being utilised for their skills. So the early lot of volunteers went out and were like... what am I doing here, I don’t feel like the objectives in the assignment match up with what I do here, and then you kind of get passed over, or you just become a general ‘dogs body’, running around doing all these mundane things... Because you know who we partner with also, they often don’t know. They don’t even know how to use standard volunteers in some cases, which is why they have volunteers. So it was about trying to really build up those objectives of the assignments... So I was doing things like moving them around, saying ok that’s enough, we will find you somewhere else to go, so I would move them to another partner organisation if I felt they were going to be utilised better.” KI 055

Overall, this presents a challenge when placing younger volunteers on assignments who may not be as adept as older volunteers are at adjusting to challenging workplace environments. The value of clear communication between the volunteer-sending organisation and the partner organisation becomes evident. When assignments fail due to such issues, the focus can shift to the individual experience and personal growth of the volunteer. No clear outcomes for the sending organisation and the host community can result from this, which contradict the main aims within IDV and instead justify the critique made about ineffective youth volunteering (Moore McBride *et al*, 2006; Tiessen and Heron, 2012). Considering the capabilities of individual volunteers and the settings in which they are placed is essential in reaching positive experiences for all parties involved.

#### **6.4.2 Age and gender barriers**

Another challenge within UniVol assignments relates to age and gender barriers in host communities. Societal values can inhibit the ability of younger volunteers, particularly young females in certain societies, to carry out particular assignment objectives and build effective workplace relationships with colleagues. The way younger volunteers adapt quickly into local societies has been noted earlier in this chapter as a positive aspect in the UniVol programme, owing to their social nature, their ability to pick up local dialects, and their cultural sensitivity. The major challenges that younger volunteers have in adapting, however, are associated with gender and age upon arrival in the host community, or when meeting individuals or groups outside of their established networks for the first time.

**Table 6.2: Gender disparity among UniVol cohorts from 2007-2015**

<b>Volunteering Year</b>	<b>Number of Males</b>	<b>Number of Females</b>	<b>Total</b>
2007	3	5	8
2008	2	4	6

2009	2	2	4
2010	2	9	11
2011	1	5	6
2012	4	6	10
2013	4	6	10
2014	1	12	13
2015	2	8	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>78</b>

(Source: Author's research)

Table 6.2 reveals that the gender balance over the entire UniVol programme is heavily weighted toward female volunteers, with just over one quarter of volunteers having been male. Challenges may be exacerbated for younger individuals who are not as successful in their ability to adjust to cultural settings, or are not prepared and orientated as UniVol volunteers are. Hopkins *et al* (2015) also identify issues with younger volunteers transcending age to gain respectability, acting above their capabilities and experience-levels. Even in such instances, a small number of UniVol participants discussed in the quotations below the challenges that age and gender pose in societies that are traditionally male dominated and ageist in nature. In regards to age, participants suggested that in certain circumstances, being able to suggest ideas or propose alternative methods to achieving workplace outcomes was limited. Their ideas were often not considered due to their age. These societies were considered to value the input of older individuals more;

“I think there are also negatives that go with it also, in that I didn’t come in with that authority that maybe someone who was older would have. I think that would probably even happen here in New Zealand also, like you have to have more respect for someone who is coming in with more experience and that kind of thing as opposed to someone younger like me.” KI007 – Timor Leste

“It was definitely challenging. I think when you are trying to get involved in things and help make decisions, you are probably not given as much respect as someone who is older. I guess you do have limited experience as well. Those were probably the two things that stood out in terms of age.” KI026 – ARB

This limited influence proved to be useful in one assignment, however, where a particular UniVol volunteer argued that capacity building and empowerment remained the main focus of the assignment. Holding less responsibility gave more flexibility in working on smaller projects, as opposed to being involved in larger, more demanding roles.

“My parents visiting was really interesting, because my Dad was 58 and my Mum was similar. Age was really respected and it’s seen that older people have more wisdom... People interacted with them because they were older, so it was

interesting to see that change. It goes both ways, because it was nice to be young, to be able to be like, oh well, I'm not sure and people would be like, oh yeah, of course you are still young. I think for the older volunteers, they held more authority... One point where it stood out to me actually was when we called a committee meeting to create a parents committee for the kindergarten. They nominated a small committee to be responsible. I guess because I was young, maybe because I was female, but not really, it wasn't expected that it was my role to be leading it in any way, or to be particularly involved in any way. So, I think at that point it was good, it was quite easy for me to step back and just introduce myself, but let all the discussion carry on without me." KI 043 – Tanzania

In relation to gender issues, in the quotation below UniVols alluded to challenges not only in the workplace, in regards to having a voice to put forward suggestions and build relationships with colleagues of a different gender, but also within the general community. For males, understanding how social relations with women are conducted and maintained in certain communities can be different from the lifestyles that they are used to in New Zealand. Whether it is appropriate to be building informal relationships in certain settings was discussed by participants in particular. The same can be said for females in forming relationships with males. Female participants, however, alluded to added societal pressures, in terms of dressing in a culturally appropriate manner, experiencing unwanted encounters with males in social settings, and experiencing issues in expressing their opinions and having their views considered, on account of their gender.

"I had quite a few issues just being a young female, especially when I was placed on the island, which is quite remote; one ferry out per week sort of thing. So I faced a few issues with harassment and groping and dicks flopping out and that sort of stuff. My biggest issue was probably safety and I kind of felt that hindered me a bit of being part of the community because I had to really be cautious of getting out of the house and really prepare myself for the onslaught. 99% of the time it was friendly, but the rest maybe not so much." KI 007 – Timor Leste

"One inhibitor was sometimes cross-culturally being a young female. That was a hard place to speak from in terms of people having respect for you, but I think for my assignment it was a good fit because I was working with young people and they were only slightly younger than me." KI 016 – Vanuatu

"For me as a male I think there have been times where people just sit up and listen to what I say because I am a male. I think it's a bit of a cultural thing, and speaking with some of the female staff, they have told me that they are used to listening to a male voice. So, there are times where myself and the other UniVol have had discussions about this, where she wanted to talk to Heads of Departments about getting things done, and I have gone and had the same discussion and they have acted upon it immediately, whereas they are far more

slack. There could be a variety of reasons for that, but there is definitely the gender thing here.” KI 047 – PNG

“She is a fantastic counterpart, in the fact that she gets on well with people and she is so game to learn, but I mean the counter to that is that in Bougainville culture, men and women don’t socialise huge amounts. The UniVol last year was fantastic for that, so the relationships between me and the counterpart and the previous UniVol and the counterpart will be very different. So, outside of work I feel that from a cultural standpoint, we can’t socialise huge amounts. I mean we have all the other factors going for us, like we are similar in age and get along very well, but it’s just not something that happens outside of work, you don’t socialise with the other sex if you can help it” KI 046 – ARB

How deeply gender and age-related issues influence the overall assignment does depend on the individual volunteer and how adverse such barriers are in different communities. VSA attempt to ensure that volunteers are aware of the potential challenges that are posed by gender and age, by incorporating such discussions into their briefing and orientation programmes. In-country staff also have measures in place to provide support in these areas if required. For younger volunteers, however, this does pose added challenges when such values are entrenched in communities. Careful management and negotiation are required, therefore, to ensure that the opportunity to work with the partner organisation and be involved in aspects of community life is still attainable. This must be conducted in a way that respects local customs, as well as the agency of the individuals whom the volunteer interacts with.

#### **6.4.3 Prioritising expatriate groups over local community engagement**

The final common challenge identified by a number of UniVol volunteers concerns the social aspects of the volunteer experience. As mentioned, many younger volunteers have advanced social skills and an ability to adapt well to local cultures. When UniVols are able to build relationships with groups and individuals in the community, their experiences are perceived to be more fulfilling and successful. Overall, this has been the case for most UniVol volunteers, who have connected well with the community in various ways. Some have achieved this better than others, but in general, good relationships with local individuals or groups are common. A challenge to establishing these meaningful connections and experiencing a deeper connection to the community, however, is finding the appropriate social balance between local community groups and the larger expatriate communities that exist within these developing nations.

In countries where VSA has sent UniVol volunteers, there are often a number of other volunteers, both from VSA and from other volunteer-sending agencies from around the world, working in similar communities. In certain cases, volunteers from different organisations work within the same partner organisations. Added to this are the general expatriate and ‘development’ communities that are also present. Naturally, these societal groups can create advantages for younger volunteers, as individuals are able to share their experiences and coping strategies with one another. They may also hold shared interests, doing activities together and exploring the countries in which they are assigned. Often, volunteers are also housed in the same areas as each other, and close to expatriate and development professionals, owing to safety concerns. Whilst this can be beneficial, there are also certain issues that arise when such networks are extensively connected. The quotations below indicate how certain UniVols became deeply immersed within expatriate communities, limiting their connections with the local community and in doing so, forgoing the rich cultural and social aspects that relationships with such local communities can offer. Other participants have also alluded to the challenge of maintaining balance between the sometimes juxtaposing communities. The participants below note that in hindsight, their lack of connection with the local community may have limited their achievements and their satisfaction towards their overall volunteering experience;

“Unfortunately, it wasn’t big. It was quite a hard place to break into the local community. Especially when you are working in an organisation that is not specifically linked to the community you are living in, it was kind of detached. I was living in the VSA housing complex which they have had for a long time, so people were all very used to different faces showing up all the time. I had some conversations with my neighbours sometimes, but nothing really substantive, which is really disappointing. I didn’t quite realise it was going to be that difficult, just the opportunities didn’t feel like they were there, and even if I went to hang out on the beach close to my house, it always felt like there was a big gap between myself and the people around me. I don’t know whether it was my own issue, or if everyone felt that way. Because I didn’t have a counterpart also, I felt like I didn’t have access into any parts of the community. Socially, I mainly hung out with other volunteers, even though I swore I wouldn’t do that, that’s how it ended up working out” KI 011 – ARB

“But I do find I spend a lot of my time socialising with other expats and volunteers, rather than locals... I think it’s just because I live with them, and there is a big group of Australian volunteers here and there are also some VSA’s here also, so it’s just ended up that those are the people who are all in the same kind of situation as you, so I guess those are the people who you connect with. But I have also socialised with people from work and outside of work too, but yeah I would say on a daily basis the main people would be other volunteers, which is not necessarily how you would have planned it when you arrived, but it’s just in honesty how it has worked out a bit.” KI 049 – Samoa



Other volunteers, who were able to find a balance and build social connections to local community groups and with individuals, have spoken about the fulfilment that this gave to them both during and after their volunteering assignment had completed. The quotations below show how moving away from volunteer and expatriate communities allowed certain UniVols to carry out a more rewarding volunteer experience, becoming more intimate with local communities;

“Port Vila in general had heaps of volunteers yeah, bit of an AusAid hot spot, and the AYAD [Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development] programme were the main ones.... I probably did less with the other kiwi volunteers than what other people did. That was just personal preference, but I still definitely you know they were pretty good support networks, we had dinners together and went to the pub together every now and then. Vila is kind of the place where you can be really involved with the expat community and probably almost only interact with westerners, or you can go totally the opposite extreme and only talk to local people, so I tried to have a good mix, but tried to make the most of local connections.” KI 016 – Vanuatu

“Here, the expat volunteer community... it’s really hard to find that balance here, but yeah I think I found it. With expats, they are on an entirely different wavelength, lifestyle and pay check, and it makes things really strange. Initially, I wanted to meet them all and get to know them, then when I realised that there are so many, and you just see each other at all these social things and it’s like, oh my god, these people are just my constant acquaintances. So I really drifted away from it and went more for the local. I think coming here, my goal was to have local friends and I wanted to really try to not stick too closely to the expats... A lot of them are purely here for profit, so I tried to steer clear of that. For me, even the cleaning staff are friends at work and I can talk with them, but it’s pretty good here in the general social community. The expats for them, their house people are the help and you only talk to them if you tell them to do something, and I struggle with that.” KI 053 – PNG

This was also noted by VSA staff, who saw the levels of achievement rise in volunteers who were able to connect to both groups. Their ability to do so also reinforced the social skills that many younger UniVols held, as opposed to their older counterparts.

“And again, there is a funny thing with the older and the younger ones about the expat and local lifestyle. It’s hard to get to know locals and hang out with them and socialise, and older people find this too so they sometimes will gravitate to the expat community of older people. The younger people, I think there is a bit more integration, but there still is that issue that there is a young expat crowd here that they will gravitate towards if it is hard, and not keep trying with local people and keep trying to understand how to socialise locally.” KI 076

A number of other factors can also be out of the individual volunteer control in regards to finding a balance and connecting with local communities. The types of assignments can impact this, whether the role is more social, like youth work, as opposed to an office or administration role. Another variable is the size of the community, with volunteers in cities perhaps unable to gain a similar intimate community experience as a volunteer in a more remote community might. Certain younger volunteers can be susceptible to becoming immersed in volunteer and expatriate communities. For some, their lack of experience living away from home can draw them closer to individuals from similar backgrounds. For others, who may be shy and lack experience in foreign settings, this can also develop a tendency to connect with such groups. The challenge of balancing such groups is integral to delivering effective assignments that are focused on the needs of the host community, as much as the individual volunteer themselves.

## **6.5 VSA's organisational capacity to support volunteers**

The common successes and challenges experienced by UniVols give indication to where younger volunteers can be effective in the IDV field, and how these factors can transcend into other youth IDV programmes to enhance younger volunteer outcomes. This links to RQ #1 specifically, as well as the overall aims of the research, by emphasising the potential that younger volunteers have in IDV. The final element of discussion that will contribute toward this area of research lies within the organisational elements of the UniVol programme that are administered by VSA, and understanding how these successes and challenges are aided or addressed by the sending organisation. VSA has an underlying strategic plan that drives their volunteering programmes. They have in place a number of steps to prepare, support and assist their volunteers from pre-departure to re-entry in New Zealand (detailed in Chapter Four). Certain elements within this programme have been considered to be valuable, from the volunteers themselves, as well as the staff members and the partner organisations associated with VSA. Lough and Allum (2013) emphasise the importance of appropriate structures to assist volunteers in their ability to advocate for positive change in developing communities (see Lopez Franco and Shahrokh, 2015). The ensuing discussion will focus on three major aspects that enable the UniVol programme to provide volunteers with the capacity to achieve the successes mentioned earlier, or limit the challenges that younger volunteers face.

### **6.5.1 Length of assignments**

One element to youth volunteering that has drawn some contentious debate is around the length of assignment. Within experiential student learning, which shares similar elements to IDV related volunteering undertaken by UniVols, Tiessen and Heron (2012) support such notions, identifying that the positive benefits for host communities can correlate with the length of time a younger volunteer is in-country. Shorter assignments (less than six months) “may be considered valuable to the volunteers in terms of their personal growth, but not to the growth of the NGO, since there is insufficient time to share skills or complete work” (Tiessen and Heron, 2012: 47). Chapters Two and Three have shown that within IDV there is now an increasing trend toward assignments becoming shorter in length. VSA itself has come under increased pressure to shorten volunteer assignments by its main funder, MFAT, who is focused on delivering sustainable economic development through highly professionalised and shorter volunteer roles (KI 100). Traditional assignments for older volunteers generally span two years or more, but are also changing as many volunteer sending organisations adapt to competitive neoliberal volunteering principles. Programmes from one year to three months in length, which address organisational systems and processes, are now increasingly common. The concept of investing time in communities has therefore been openly challenged. Younger volunteering projects in particular that last for only a number of weeks in certain circumstances, have become increasingly scrutinised in terms of what value they actually have for local communities.

In relation to the UniVol programme itself, volunteer assignments typically last from ten months to a year. VSA as the sending organisation is relatively flexible on specified timescales for volunteers, depending on the needs of the partner organisation and the volume of work available at the end of the year. The assignment length, however, was set to ensure that younger volunteers had time to become involved in projects, avoiding the notion of sending volunteers away in voluntourism-like capacities. This was effective as it also fitted in well with university calendars, allowing volunteers to commit to the programme that covered an entire university year.

The length of UniVol assignments has drawn mixed opinion from all stakeholders involved. On one side, participants have noted that year-long assignments provide ample opportunity for volunteers to contribute towards the partner organisations and make established connections within the local community. In certain instances, where there is limited opportunity to contribute towards the partner organisation or a lack of work

available, participants have argued that a year-long assignment can seem extremely long. On the other side, however, participants have noted that UniVols have argued that they could have continued to contribute to the organisation and build on the progress they had made, if their assignments had been longer. One common aspect to this was that UniVols, who were slower to adjust to local conditions or working environments, spent over half of their time settling in. This meant that these individuals were often finishing their assignments when they had only just begun to produce visible outcomes. Overall, however, UniVols who had completed assignments close to one year in length felt they had enough time to have an effective volunteering impact and experience.

The length of assignment is an important consideration when facilitating youth-volunteer programmes. With the UniVol programme, it seems that VSA has reached a relatively effective balance in offering year-long assignments. Allowing younger volunteers to have enough time to gain that full volunteering experience and work towards active capacity building within their partner organisations can be difficult. It is important that sufficient time is provided to mitigate the possible burden that volunteers can place on host communities in short, ineffectual assignments, to produce an assignment that has clear rewards for both the volunteer and the host. Individual distinctiveness within volunteers and partner organisations compound such challenges, something which requires flexibility. The UniVol assignment, in general, tends to succeed in fitting around the needs of all three stakeholders involved, ensuring that the programme does work towards VSA's aims of addressing development in host nations. Finding this balance is essential for volunteer-sending organisations in supporting their younger volunteers, whilst actively offering an avenue for positive outcomes that can justify the inclusion of youth in IDV.

#### **6.5.2 Adequate support networks**

Another factor intrinsic to younger volunteers' successes is the organisational support networks that are offered to volunteers. The data collected through the interview process identified a clear difference in the pastoral care that younger volunteers require as opposed to older volunteers. For some youth, their volunteering experiences can be their first time living away from family and friends for an extended period. This can prove challenging when life itself in host communities presents difficulties. It is through these challenging times, and in the inability to adjust to community life, where scholars have argued that younger volunteers can place extra burdens upon their hosts. Providing extra care and directing resources to

volunteers, when hosts themselves are already burdened, can be regarded as neo-colonial (Mangold, 2012; Tiessen and Heron, 2012).

What the volunteer-sending organisation offers for its volunteers, therefore, is important in nullifying additional trials for its developing partners. Sending organisations can play a role in providing adequate support in the pre-departure stages of the volunteering experience, ensuring that volunteers are well prepared for their impending assignments. As mentioned in Chapters Four and Five, VSA has an established pre-departure briefing process that provides its volunteers with detailed information around their development aims, about the countries they work in, and also medical and safety advice for the possible challenges they may face. Tyler and Walter (2006) emphasise how important preparation is, especially in relation to the inevitable frustrations and challenges that volunteers will face. Almost all UniVol participants commented on the positive impact that such a process had on their experiences, giving them forewarning of the various issues that they may encounter, and other practical advice about living in their specific host-nations. Tiessen and Kumar (2013) emphasise that students may not have sound knowledge or contextual understanding about their impending volunteer destinations. Giving younger volunteers detailed information can assist them in their preparation and also with their initial adjustment period.

Comments made concerning in-country support for UniVols were dependent on the various countries in which they were volunteering. VSA has programme managers in most countries where volunteers are based, although for certain places this role is done externally from its Wellington headquarters. When programmes were managed externally, volunteers generally found that the organisational support networks were lacking. When staff were not able to respond to personal or partner organisation issues in person, volunteer experiences appeared more difficult. Individuality again plays a major factor, where more independent volunteers did not have a problem with this. In-country staff, however, were more responsive to volunteer issues and provided better pastoral care, which gave a better overall experience to those volunteers who needed on such support. This is demonstrated in the quotation below;

“Yeah, it’s really important to have a local person in the field because things are always fluid in the Pacific, and being a local you always know what is happening and you know the story behind the scenes and so on. You can always be looking out for new opportunities for volunteers and you are motivated because it’s your country, so what you want is sustainability and you want things to happen. So it’s a driving factor for me.” KI 072 – Vanuatu

As younger volunteers generally require a higher level of pastoral support and advice for work-related challenges, in-country networks are important to aid success. During the field-based research for this project, VSA was beginning to address certain aspects of this. One aspect in particular, which provided volunteers and partner organisations with more effective communication and direction, was in the hiring of local programme officers to assist VSA programme managers. Normally, VSA in-country programme managers are hired from New Zealand and placed in-country for their contract lengths. Programme officers are then hired locally within larger field programmes to provide administration support. During field research, however, it was evident that the roles of certain programme officers were being expanded upon, to work more closely with programme managers on required duties; finding accommodation for volunteers, scoping potential assignments, and managing volunteers themselves. In countries where programme managers were externally based, for example in Samoa, VSA had hired a local staff member to facilitate those roles in-country that could not be managed from a distance. This increased capacity through local input, and from an organisational standpoint, gives VSA a much more embedded connection to the local community, assisting volunteers with issues that they struggle to manage. Having local employees with extended responsibilities allows the organisation to be more in-touch with community processes. This is exemplified in the quotation below;

“Yeah I think because in the past here in Samoa, they didn’t have a country programme officer. So I think it’s a way of creating transparent communication. Like I am always here so if there is something that is going on in the work place, then they need to let me know. I prefer to have an issue resolved at that moment while they are here in the country, so we can work it out and it can benefit their assignment and themselves.” KI 067 – Samoa

The in-country orientation arriving volunteers has also been an area where local staff can provide a more detailed cultural perspective, helping volunteers to assimilate into daily life. Increased efficiency was also evident, as local employees can provide further clarity for partner organisations on issues that are lost in cultural translation, and can gain access to the local community in ways that outsiders cannot. The dedication and commitment to the community that local VSA employees provide, working in parallel with in-country programme managers, can therefore benefit all stakeholders involved.

### **6.5.3 Volunteer retention**

One final aspect that was frequently mentioned around organisational support for volunteers was the challenges surrounding volunteer retention in similar partner organisations. In some

cases, VSA has had longstanding relationships with certain partner organisations overseas, supplying them with multiple volunteers. UniVols in particular are more inclined to be assigned to a partner organisation which has had a previous volunteer, in certain instances even following on from multiple UniVols at the same organisation. This can be linked to a number of reasons. The first is the way that UniVols apply to the programme, instead of responding to specific job descriptions. This can make finding appropriate roles in a timely manner a challenge for VSA. Coupled with this are the more general skills that UniVols contribute, allowing them to be placed within organisations that require continual support on a wide range of projects. Adjusting to past experiences where assignments have failed also encourages volunteer retention, as VSA aims to ensure that there is a trusting environment where the UniVol is working. The idea of continually sending volunteers to organisations is one that is not specifically addressed in current literature, but relates more widely to the aims of providing capacity and support to a stage where organisations can become self-dependent and sustainable (Tyler and Walter, 2006; Johnston *et al*, 2012; Burns and Howard, 2015).

In building sustainability, development theory would propose that the role of volunteers would gradually subside as local capacity expands. Continual volunteer retention on similar projects would challenge whether the work volunteers are doing is sustainable, if further volunteers are required. Respondents had mixed views of this in relation to the UniVol programme. Generally, UniVols who were filling similar roles as previous volunteers identified that their specific individual skills and characteristics enabled them to contribute to partner organisations in different ways. In certain organisations that have a wider scope for volunteers to direct their energy, like sporting clubs and youth-based organisations, the overlapping aspect was nullified as volunteers could focus on one element of the organisation. Organisations where volunteers were working with counterparts that were in lower paid roles that included youth, such as peer educators and tutors, were also noted to have regular staff turnover. This meant that volunteers often worked with different counterparts from their predecessors.

In certain cases, however, some participants identified that their assignment descriptions were extremely similar in nature, questioning whether the assignments had been adequately reviewed by programme managers. This was often in situations where the assignment roles were focused on specific projects. The quotation below raises the issue of establishing sustainability within the partner organisation and fulfilling assignment roles that aim to deliver this. Fulfilling assignment descriptions that were similar to previous

volunteers, and finding that there was substantial capacity to build, raised questions around the contributions that previous volunteers had made, or whether the partner organisation was at fault due to its dysfunctional nature;

“One of the things I’ve noticed about UniVol roles is that they seem to be the same roles over and over again for volunteers. The whole principle of volunteering is that you should be leaving skills behind with other people, and yes there were people who I wasn’t supposed to be working with directly which I helped in various roles, but in terms of the specific assignment outcomes, I was there to help someone to learn how to do this... The organisation that I was at, they had more than 10 volunteers in the last 5 years. When I first started it felt like there was one white person to two locals, and it was still very much a ‘we get lots of outside help from outside organisations’ and yes, they needed it, but it could have been done better. It was quite disappointing that the same people were getting volunteers, so I thought it wasn’t very fluid from VSA’s point of view.” KI 008 – ARB

Placing younger volunteers in similar roles as previous volunteers has the possibility to limit assignment outcomes if previous assignments have not been adequately reviewed. VSA does take certain measures to ensure that this does happen. At the time of research, there was evidence of programme managers expanding their assignment outlooks and moving volunteer assignments away from partner organisations who were perceived to have either plateaued in their progress after hosting multiple volunteers, or who were not utilising volunteers effectively. Rigorous reviews of assignments and constant communication with partner organisations can ensure that the challenges that younger volunteers face on assignment are not intensified through retention, when they are presented with clear aims and objectives.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

Volunteering itself presents a number of challenges that have to be navigated by both the volunteer and the host community. Organisationally, there are also a number of facets that need to be considered and addressed well before the volunteer enters the field. This ensures that there is a level of understanding around what the volunteer is aiming to achieve and what skills they can impart to the host. This chapter has explored RQ #1 in detail, considering the perceptions of UniVol volunteers and VSA staff to highlight the impacts of the UniVol programme, as perceived by Western stakeholders. UniVols themselves are a distinctive branch of younger volunteers. Through a discussion of the common successes and challenges faced by UniVol volunteers, this chapter has shown how certain experiences can



be utilised to understand not only the role that younger volunteers play within IDV, but the key elements that are essential to consider when placing younger volunteers in the field. The key positives of the UniVol programme centre on the ability of younger volunteers to impart general skills-sets, such as basic computer and written skills, alongside their tailored skills that have been developed during their university experiences. Delivering such skills can be integral to the functionality of the partner organisation, where often these basic skills-sets are overlooked in larger development agendas. Combined with this are specific core attributes that are commonly held among UniVols. Their ability to be flexible and adapt to workplace demands, their willingness to become immersed within local communities and connect with individuals, their knowledge in development studies that allows for cultural sensitivity and respect, and their ability to connect with youthful populations within the demographics of host nations, are all valuable traits that enable positive exchanges. These attributes have allowed UniVol volunteers to achieve positive results within partner organisations and wider communities, ensuring that benefit lies not only with the volunteer, but with the hosts also. Certain attributes are held among youth in general, which can be translated into other youth IDV programmes.

A discussion of the common negative aspects reveals issues connected to younger IDV programmes when communication and understanding are not clear. This can have a dramatic impact on the ability of the volunteer, when programmes are not clearly understood by the partner organisation and the volunteer is limited in what they can achieve. Issues can also extend from cultural barriers. Specific cultural traits can limit the participation of younger people, affecting the relationships that volunteers can build with hosts. Challenges can also be created if the volunteer chooses to associate largely with expatriate groups, failing to connect with local groups and individuals. This chapter has considered how these negative aspects have limited UniVol experiences, and how they can compound the pressures placed on younger volunteers if they are not managed appropriately. Distinct organisational commitments also compliment this discussion, revealing how effective certain methods can be in supporting younger volunteers as they participate in volunteer exchanges. VSA has in place effective measures in pre-departure briefings, in-country support networks, and in the length of UniVol assignments, which have enabled volunteers to achieve in the field. Effective organisational support can help to accentuate the positive aspects of younger volunteering, limiting the impact of negative implications. These structures can be beneficial in supporting youth in the field and ensuring that they have the greatest opportunity to achieve their assignment objectives.

The UniVol programme has not been without its challenges since its establishment in 2006, as younger volunteering includes a number of different variables that can be difficult to align. Overall, however, the successes that have resulted over the history of the programme have led to positive change within a number of partner organisations and local communities. The flexibility to adjust and react to the way that assignments have eventuated, has allowed the UniVol programme to challenge the stigma surrounding youth volunteering. These factors enable programmes to generally limit the neo-colonial and neoliberal issues that can be evident within youth volunteering, at the same time aligning closely with the development aims that VSA maintains as a sending organisation.

# Chapter Seven

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## **Volunteer motivations**

## 7.1 Introduction

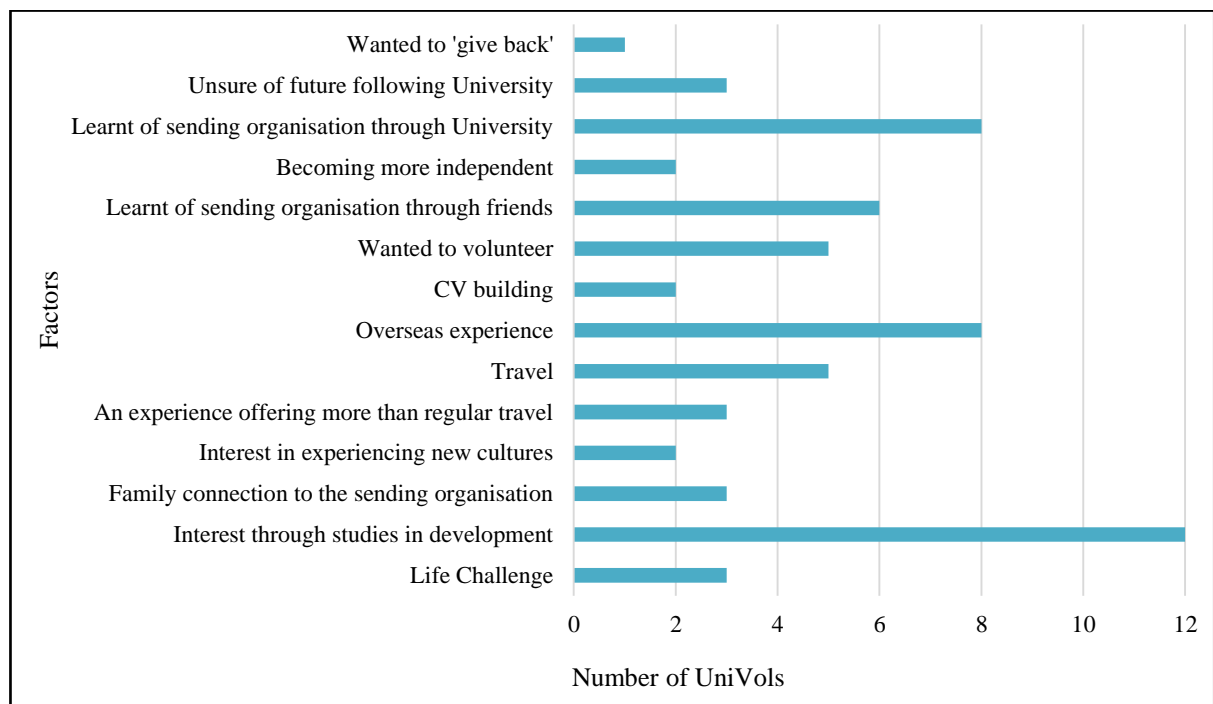
One of the more comprehensively studied aspects of volunteering focuses on individual motivation and the factors that prompt volunteers to become involved in projects. As volunteering has become increasingly influenced by neoliberal policies, further questions have been raised over the motivations of volunteers. Whether their involvement reflects altruistic motives to assist the communities in which they work, or whether individual motives driven by self-development and personal gain dominate their intentions, is of concern. The challenge with this lies with the rather unclear delineation of the term ‘volunteering’, an issue raised in previous chapters. Individuals who are involved in short-term international volunteer tourism projects, for example, have vastly different experiences and target outcomes to those who volunteer in their own countries, or those who spend longer amounts of time volunteering abroad under a development focus (Jones, 2011). This has led Butcher and Smith (2015) to challenge the underlying development discourses that are used to critique the volunteer tourist experience. They go beyond traditional development approaches that are tied to volunteer tourism, to consider the role that contemporary lifestyle politics play in the consumption and behaviour of those who volunteer on holiday. Overall, they contest whether volunteer tourists should be tied to delivering development when they essentially remain tourists at heart (Butcher and Smith, 2015).

In comparison, IDV is driven by development principles. The role and impact that youth have in IDV specifically, and how their motivations affect this, is of concern to this thesis. This is an area that is relatively under-researched in relation to other volunteering sub-branches. It is neither the aim of this chapter, nor the thesis, to go into specific detail concerning volunteer motivation. This is well considered throughout published literature (see Chapter Two). How such motivation relates to the future careers and outcomes for youth volunteers in IDV specifically, and how the programme is managed in such a way as to maintain a balanced outcome for both the volunteer and the host community, is of interest in relation to understanding what contributions youth IDV volunteers can make. RQ #2 seeks to understand how motivation influences the volunteer assignment and the future pathways that younger volunteers choose. To examine such points, this chapter will initially consider the motivations of UniVol volunteers, exploring the neoliberal and altruistic binary that is inherent in UniVol commitment. What drives volunteers to apply to the UniVol programme, and their reflections on this, will be analysed. Following this, discussion will then shift to the organisational aspects from VSA’s point-of-view, in order to understand how sending

organisations can manage programmes in a way that ensures their developmental aims and objectives are delivered. From here, this chapter will then look toward the future directions that UniVol volunteers have taken, examining the impact that volunteering has had in shaping their future careers. Whether motivations change during the volunteer experience, and how they influence future decision making, will be interesting aspects to this discussion.

## 7.2 What motivates UniVol volunteers?

During the research process, UniVol participants were asked what their main motivations were to join the UniVol programme and commit to volunteering overseas. In certain responses, participants gave more than one answer, identifying a combination of factors that attracted their interest in the programme. Figure 7.1 below showcases the various motivations that led to volunteer commitment.



**Figure 7.1: Factors motivating UniVol participants (Source: Author's research)**

Certain responses from UniVol participants in Figure 7.1 show a distinct purpose in their desire to volunteer with VSA. These align with either an altruistic notion concerning other individuals, with a more individual demand for self-improvement, or with both. The nature of the UniVol programme, and the unique criteria that require prospective volunteers to have academic experience in development studies, creates an interesting dynamic when considering the altruistic and individual factors to volunteering motivation. The programme stands out from other youth IDV programmes because of this, as it provides it with a more development-orientated emphasis over other programmes that recruit youth with a range of

educational qualifications. However, that is not to say that the main motivational drivers of UniVols are inherently altruistic, owing to their knowledge and interest in development studies. The following sections will consider the information presented in Figure 7.1, discussing the three most common motivational groups that revolve around education, travel, and the influence of family and friends.

### **7.2.1 Education-related motivation**

For the majority of UniVols, their experiences throughout their university education are strongly aligned to their motivations in applying to volunteer (shown in Figure 7.1). This carries both selfish and selfless motivations. For some, an interest in studying development-related courses led to an awareness of the role that volunteering plays within development. The quotations below reveal a genuine desire among UniVols to utilise the knowledge they had gained at university, connecting the theoretical elements they had studied to the practical aspects of the UniVol programme. Such notions mirror ideas presented by Lough *et al* (2012), who suggest that as an understanding of global concerns increases, so does the concern to advocate for global causes and volunteering.

“I had always thought about it. I had really enjoyed the development papers at Otago, and I had done a lot of travelling and I guess I had always been interested in social justice and I had travelled in Third World countries with my parents as a kid. So that kind of work had always interested me, and this kind of work seemed like a really good opportunity to do that.” KI 037 – South Africa

“I studied Development Studies at university, and I sort of wanted to do that and work in the development field since I was 16, when I watched a video about Tanzania and thought how is this happening in our world and how it is OK and acceptable... So when I heard about VSA, yeah, I thought it was an awesome opportunity and I thought why not put my hand in and see whether I get a chance, and I was lucky enough to get a chance... That’s what still motivates me, and I still want to work in development...” KI 040 – PNG

Linked to this is the level of consideration that UniVols applied to joining VSA. Participants in the quotations below stressed that the aims of VSA, and the local-level, capacity driven focus that pushes the mantra of the programme, appealed to them in their wishes to provide more meaningful, development-orientated assistance;

“I thought it was a great opportunity to get some experience whilst studying. I also wanted to go to a different country and do development work. I was reasonably positive about the impact that I thought VSA could have in countries. So I thought it would be a good opportunity for both myself and to do some good.” KI 034 – Cambodia

“But then I guess the biggest thing was, especially from doing some development theory, when we looked at how VSA was working, it stood out as being really different to when you look at those kind of voluntourism things that people do and that it kind of showed that it wanted to work in that way... that we had looked at all this theory that said maybe this was the best way to go about it.” KI 043 – Tanzania

“I think that aid work does have its place in countries where it is desperately needed, but in a country like Vanuatu, a developing country where people aren’t starving, I think skills exchange is a more appropriate way for help to be provided... What they are desperate for is skills and to be able to learn something and then do it themselves. It’s more sustainable and I don’t like it when my friends go to Africa and hug babies for a month then leave, because I feel like that would be completely inappropriate... I was curious on all that kind of stuff through my studies, which made me want to link that to an adventure, which is why VSA looked good.” KI 020 – Vanuatu

Motivations linked to university experience also reveal the individual drive that certain participants hold, to gain first-hand practical experience that can link to their theoretical knowledge (Tiessen, 2012). The programme itself is marketed in a way that offers an experience that can provide a “personal development opportunity for selected candidates” within IDV programmes (Volunteer Service Abroad, 2015). Such language fits within the discussion about neoliberal subjectivity presented in Chapter Two, where the entrepreneurial benefits for the self are emphasised within the overall volunteering experience. This can also be seen as a tactic to make volunteer programmes more profitable, as it is hoped that the potential skills and experiences that can be acquired to benefit the volunteer can translate into higher applicant numbers. It is not then surprising that from an individual standpoint, many UniVols who had become motivated through their university experiences subsequently spoke of the benefits that practical experience would provide them, as indicated in the quotations below. For some, the ability to tie theoretical development concepts to the physical environment was a major incentive. For others, who expressed interest in pursuing development-related career paths or further development-related study, the individual benefits were evident in gaining valuable experience. This was considered to place them in a stronger position, whether that be in terms of accessing potential research interests, or through the practical experiences which are valuable for civil service and NGO job positions;

“I knew that volunteering, being in the field, would all be good for getting hands-on experience after studying development studies. I think that is it kind of something that is needed if you are going to be in that area of work. So, yeah,

kind of just provided a good follow-on from undergraduate Uni.” KI 028 – Samoa

“At the time I was thinking about going into development work, so I wanted to get some on-the-ground experience because for a lot of job applications you have to have experience, but to get experience it’s quite difficult, so I thought it was a great opportunity to get some experience whilst studying.” KI 034 – Cambodia

“The opportunity to travel and to keep learning was just brilliant, and it helped bridge that gap between leaving university and starting in the development industry. It’s always quite a challenge to burst into it if you don’t have experience. You have to work for somebody, so the UniVol experience was a really good bridge for that.” KI 044 – Tanzania

The requirement that UniVols need to apply, therefore, lends itself to both individual and altruistic outcomes. Overall, however, discussion amongst participants revealed predominantly individual motives, specifically in the initial application stages for the programme. This parallels other research around volunteers (Lo and Lee, 2011; King, 2011; Tomazos and Butler, 2012), and youth volunteers in particular (Jones, F, 2000; Palmer, 2002; Holdsworth, 2010; Tiessen, 2012). It also reinforces the neoliberal forces within IDV, and how prospective volunteers can view the volunteering experience as a way to advance their self-development. The use of development-related knowledge to consider the legitimacy and appropriateness of the sending organisation, however, is a characteristic among UniVols that shows altruistic aims hold importance alongside individual gains. Gaining a ‘conscientisation’ of development is suggested to give the individual an understanding of wider development structures and extended critical reasoning (Green, 2012).

### **7.2.2 Travel-related motivation**

Motivations around travel were also important to a significant proportion of participants. Within this, there were both individual and altruistic sentiments. Travel motivations were expressed through a desire to have an overseas experience, to have an extended travel period, and also to travel in a way that was considered to offer more than the basic mass tourism product, learning more about foreign cultures and customs (see Plate 7.1). Of those participants who identified their desire for travel and an overseas experience within their motivating factors, rhetoric regarding individualism was aligned towards self-experience. The opportunity to spend time in a different geographical and cultural environment, and gain the knowledge and skills that come with year-long placements, were points expressed by participants in the quotations below;



“Practically, the reasons for going was that I really regretted not going on an exchange while I was at university, I thought about going somewhere, but I never did it because of the costs. So I decided not to do that, but I was really wanting to travel and get out of Wellington, so here was this opportunity which was very low risk in terms of money, because they provide most of what you need.” KI 011 – Timor Leste

“Well basically I wanted to travel for a long time, and I just saw it as an opportunity to go somewhere that was pretty mad, and do something different and get away from what I was doing. My motivations were probably more selfish than voluntarily. At the start I wasn’t that interested in... I didn’t think I could educate these people because I was a 22 year old trying to still figure out the world myself. I guess my motivations were more about me than volunteering my time. At the same time during that process I probably became more motivated in making sure the programmes I was running were good and successful, so my motivations over time probably changed.” KI 015 – Vanuatu



**Plate 7.1: The Kokapo markets. Offering a ‘different’ shopping experience for volunteers in PNG (Source: Author’s research)**

The majority of responses around travel motivations tended to tie both individual motivation and altruistic considerations together, drawing in a number of other factors. Again, the link to educational aims and experience was an aspect (to travel) that many participants had considered in their pre-assessment of the UniVol programme. The desire to experience other cultures and ways of life was also expressed in a way that had individual and self-enhancement aims, yet exhibited altruism in the way that participants considered such an experience in the context of development. What knowledge they had gained at university, as well as an interest in what VSA represented as an organisation from their

perspective, illustrates a deeper consideration of host communities. Certain participants acknowledged their initial selfish motives, discussing how their commitment to the programme and the aims of it grew throughout their assignments. These ideas were expressed in the quotations below;

“I think I was curious about what it would be like to live somewhere completely different, and I am really interested in learning about different cultures and I really loved the development papers I did at university. Some of the reasons would be selfish, like I just wanted to do something intrepid, but I also wanted to do something that was going to make it worthwhile going away for a whole year... I don't think I ever thought oh man I just want to help people. One of my papers I did, they were talking about some of the negative impacts of aid work, and I think that really stuck with me and I wanted to see for myself, I was just curious. But I am now one of those people who have quite particular views about aid work versus skills exchange and things like that now that I never knew I had before.” KI 020 – Vanuatu

“I think the big thing was the chance to go overseas and experience another culture, that was a big reason at that time... But to experience another way of life and learning off of other people and seeing how they live and do things. With my studies, looking to get some hands on experience and working with communities in Third World countries, so to get some practical experience and to tie it into the theory that we studied in papers.” KI 024 – Vanuatu

The idea of being able to engage in travel in a way that offers more than the typical mass-tourism product, was an aspect that participants believed to have created more altruistic motivations when they considered applying for the UniVol programme. A small number of participants expressed stronger selfless ideals in the quotations below; the possibility of being able to ‘give back’ through volunteering in longer-term assignments. For these participants, the knowledge gained through their study experience was identified as being built on research from developing nations. They concluded that they were in a position to contribute back through a commitment to the UniVol programme;

“I guess for me all of my learning, I always get more out of it if you have an action element of it as well. So I saw the programme as a really good way to get experience in development and some experience working in a local community that is really different to you own. Obviously, part of it that was excitement for a bit of an adventure, and the willingness to be involved in VSA and do something that was spending a year of your life to give back to somewhere.” KI 026 – ARB

“I was half way through the third year of my degree, when I heard about the opportunity and I thought well that is really good. Three years into university and I was getting a bit restless and thought maybe this would be a good in-between break between finishing. And I liked that idea of traveling... So it was that sense of wanting to get out there and do some good for someone else. I feel

like I had something to give, and the opportunity to go to Vanuatu and live for a year on a tropical island and do some good was too good of an opportunity not to apply for. I think that once I got accepted, for me the excitement became stronger when you sort of learn what you are going to be doing and where you are going and living; how it all works and stuff like that, it became really exciting up to the point of getting on the plane and going there.” KI 023 – Vanuatu



**Plate 7.2: A cruise ship docked in Vila bay, Port Vila, Vanuatu (Source: Author’s research)**

Travel motivations related to volunteering are inherently participant-orientated, as the wider premise reflects the experience and the benefits that volunteering can bring to the individual (Pegg *et al*, 2012). This is where tourism-related volunteer projects have drawn their strongest criticism, as the promotion of such projects gives power to the individual from the beginning. The potential for host communities to be marginalised and further affected by neo-colonial practice, at the expense of the individual’s experience, increases (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Schech *et al*, 2015). Plate 7.2 illustrates the juxtaposition between mass tourism and the local living conditions for host community individuals. What is encouraging, in relation to the perspectives of UniVol volunteers, is that while such individual considerations are indeed apparent in their motivation, it is tied to other less self-minded aims. Such thoughts tie in with a recent shift in research that begins to consider ‘affective’ spaces, to explore a different understanding of the volunteering encounter (see Griffiths, 2014a; 2014b; Everingham, 2016; Frazer and Waitt, 2016). Participants who were initially driven to apply for the travel opportunities had also considered the directives of the sending organisation and what they would represent, and the impact and context in which



they were volunteering; the importance of interpersonal skills exchanges. Their focus lay not solely on their own potential benefits, but also with the interests of the host community and what they could offer.

### **7.2.3 Family-related motivation**

One interesting facet in the responses to volunteer motivation were the number of participants who identified the impact that family and friends had on their application for the UniVol programme. Word of mouth and a familiarity with the sending organisation has been identified in previous studies as being an aspect that motivates volunteers to apply for specific programmes (Soderman and Snead, 2008; van Goethem *et al*, 2014). This represents both altruistic and individual motives. Prospective volunteers can hear of the experiences of others and assess, or be convinced of, how such an experience might influence their personal lives. They can also be attracted to the principles and standards that the organisation maintains, and the roles that others identified that they were involved in. For UniVols, the overall responses represent the latter aspect. Participants in the quotations below discuss the VSA experiences that their friends and family had, and how they were motivated by their stories;

“Also for me, I had an upbringing around VSA. My Mum went on VSA when she was younger, and my Dad did one as well for VSO, the British equivalent. So I guess I had that upbringing behind it, you always heard good things about their time volunteering, and they always talked highly of their experiences and being somewhere else and experiencing those ways of living.” KI 024 – Vanuatu

“Yeah, I did voluntary work here, because my Aunty used work here. So I worked here in 2008, because I knew I wanted to do development studies. When I was here, I found there was the UniVol programme, but only for Otago. So from that I knew I wanted to do it, then found more about it. I worked here more in 2010 and got more background about the programme. It felt it was more sustainable and there was more capacity building involved so I wanted to do it.” KI 003, Focus Group 1 – Vanuatu

Family connections and gaining an understanding of volunteering was an important factor across UniVol applications. Hearing of the experiences of friends and acquaintances who were also youth volunteers, and understanding how they carried out their specific assignments, also motivated certain participants to apply;

“I heard about it through the Geography Department, and I had actually spoken to a friend of a friend who was one of the first UniVols to go away. She said she had had a great experience... and it was interesting when I started talking about it and I talked to my parents because they knew about VSA quite well, and my

Dad has just recently applied for an assignment also... so I guess I knew from them that it was a respectable thing to do and they were a good organisation.” KI 043 – Tanzania

“I had a few classmates and some older classmates who did it the year before I went away, which was kind of the inaugural year, and they just came back with great stories and I was inspired by and respected what they did, so I just thought I would apply and didn’t really think that I would get in, but I did. It was a pleasant surprise, and I suppose I just wanted to see a bit of the world and see somewhere else, work outside of my comfort zone.” KI 022 – Vanuatu

#### **7.2.4 Other motivational factors**

Within the three more prominent motivational categories related to travel, education, and word-of-mouth, there is an evident overlap and combination of self and selfless reasoning that has driven UniVol participation. There were, however, distinctively individual and altruistic opinions expressed by a small proportion of participants who clearly aligned to one side of this motivational dichotomy. The desire of participants to become more independent, to take on a challenge, and to use the opportunity as a means to build their employability credentials for the future, distinctively implies that the concerns of the individual volunteer are at the forefront of the decision process to apply for the programme (Zappala, 2000; Unstead-Joss, 2008). These have been highlighted as common motivational attributes in other volunteer motivation-related publications across a range of different volunteering programmes. The clear individual focus on the benefits that volunteering can offer has drawn strong critique in neoliberal and neo-colonial related discourse, tied with the issues mentioned earlier in this section and in Chapter Two.

The notion of CV building in relation to youth participation in IDV has been considerably scrutinised, arguably marginalising host communities at the expense of the development of ‘individual citizenship’ among youth from developed nations (Devereux, 2008; Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Trau, 2015). Sending organisations that promote individual development in this manner also receive criticism in the way they objectify host communities, holding business outcomes and volunteer experiences over clear development-related outcomes (Ehrichs, 2000; Desforges, 2004; Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011). Such responses suggest that even within unique IDV programmes like the UniVol project, motivation among youth can echo selfish, neoliberal tendencies for self-development. This requires sending organisations to be concise in their applicant appraisals and assignment selection, in order to ensure that the volunteer product is focused on host community outcomes.

Clearly altruistic responses were discussed noticeably less by participants, reinforcing this neoliberal shift toward individual enhancement and free-market policies. A limited number of participants spoke of their interest in wanting to volunteer, as they were positive about the impact that VSA had as an organisation and of the potential that the UniVol programme could offer to host communities. Such ideas have also been explored in current literature, but are considerably overshadowed by the negative critique of younger volunteer impact (see Rehberg, 2005; Matsuba *et al*, 2007; Pan, 2010).

### **7.3 How VSA manages various volunteer motivations**

It is apparent then, through published literature and the responses from participants in this study, that the motivations for younger IDV volunteers can be wide-ranging, either mirroring the aims of the sending organisation or being predominantly selfish in nature (Watts, 2002). How the sending organisation considers such motivations and delivers a programme that stays true to their overarching agenda is, therefore, an aspect to consider when exploring how motivation and outcome impact on volunteer input (Zappala, 2000; Allum, 2012). In regards to the promotion and development of the UniVol programme, VSA staff identify the benefits that are offered to the individual in the quotations below. The programme was initially considered as a platform to promote volunteering among a younger audience in New Zealand, to offer an experience that could possibly convert into development education upon volunteer re-entry into New Zealand. These are principles that are still strongly upheld. Individual upskilling and an opportunity for a unique experience are connected with such promotion. This mirrors the approach of other youth-orientated programmes in IDV, such as VSOs Global Xchange programme, which places emphasis on both personal development and valuable service delivery to the host organisation (Allum, 2012). There are elements of this approach, however, that reflect the pretence of youth volunteering as a stepping stone for future development careers and the development of the Western workforce.

“Absolutely. Our dream was that they would then become volunteers for us, that they would end up working at MFAT, and that has all come to fruition. From my perspective in why we first started this way back then, I think it’s been a great success.” KI 056

“Yeah it has been a really good programme. This one now, we are in the 9<sup>th</sup> year now, and I mean it wouldn’t have carried on otherwise, Council would have cut it if it wasn’t proving to be successful. The average age of volunteers now is about 44, so it’s brought that down. Also, these UniVols come back you know... It has proven to be successful for us, in terms of attracting that next younger generation. Sure there have been some hiccups, it hasn’t been plain sailing... but

largely it's been pretty positive, even for the UniVols themselves. You know it's opened up opportunities, we have two UniVols sitting out there on our staff now, so it's been quite good." KI 055

VSA do take important steps when recruiting and briefing volunteers to ensure that individual volunteer growth is not the priority of the UniVol programme. They maintain a focus on community empowerment and development that is central to their overall organisational aims. In regards to the recruitment process, VSA have fine-tuned their approach to clearly identify the most capable applicants who can offer maximum possible benefits to partner organisations. Emphasising whether participants are able to manage and adapt to the possible scenarios faced on assignment, comparing their work experiences to their time spent in other societies, and their ability to adapt to various challenges, provides VSA with a clearer understanding around individual commitment and motivation. Added to this are psychological evaluations, where participants are assessed about the potential emotional barriers and mental challenges they could face in the field, and their coping strategies to manage such issues. This level of scrutiny attempts to identify whether the proposed applicant is prepared for the possible challenges ahead, that they are aware of the expectations of UniVols, and that they have the necessary skills to contribute in a way that is beneficial for host organisations. The quotations from VSA staff below consider the progression of applicant screening;

"In recruitment, I think we have just got a bit more clever, and we have had some learnings from what we might expect from them along the way. A lot of that has been through what has happened in the field. We get some that apply that have just done so much already in their young lives, and others that have done absolutely nothing. That range has always been the case as well... so we try to not judge too much until we have been through the interview process. We err on the side of caution at interview, but not before because we have learnt through experience that giving someone a go, they can actually turn out to be a star. [We ask] very much the same questions that we ask at interview time as well, so it's sort of things around their motivations as to why they want to do it... Talking to them, you kind of get a feel for them as well and what their personalities might be like. So we are looking for people who are kind of outgoing and quite independent, people who will be ok without their support networks as well and have actually thought what it is going to mean to be away for a little bit as well. Obviously, if they haven't done it, they don't know what it is going to be like for them, we know that. But yeah just maybe that they have thought it through a bit and know what they are getting into." KI 056

"I remember when I first started being involved in the UniVol interviews, I was quite a bit like oh send everyone, they will be great as long as they are keen. Then after having to manage them in the field, I was like ok I am going to be really tough now, we are only going to send people who we think can really

cope. So my experience last year on the interview panels was quite different to the year before. I was really diving into that stuff in particular around how well people cope when they are tested, and what are their mechanisms for coping; how do they manage difficult relationships and areas around how they have shown initiative and resourcefulness... So my focus is really on how can they take what they have, and really kind of build on that and work with the opportunities that present themselves. For me, it requires a particular kind of attitude and skills-set to be able to get things done in these places.” KI 057

“Well the recruitment is different obviously, and it’s different because all the interviews are a bit more challenging because you can’t ask questions about experience. Because first of all, there is no job that we necessarily want them to do, so it’s quite hard to tease out a person’s skills if you don’t ask them specific questions. But also a lot of them don’t actually have much experience, so you kind of have to look at other things like personal maturity, or what their initiative is and that kind of stuff and hope that that’s going to be enough to get them through... So we just have to tease that out as best as we can, and sometimes you can tell that straight away, some just come across as more naturally mature... [But] I think it’s pretty solid. It’s just a slightly different version to what we would do with any normal volunteer. The difference is that people who we are interviewing are just less tested in life generally, and less tested at work.” KI 054

The briefing programme that is utilised to prepare volunteers before they enter the field builds on many of the facets from the recruitment process. VSA place emphasis on their core aims as an organisation and what is again expected of the volunteers, going into detail about specific development-related theory that aligns to their volunteering approaches. The emphasis on these aspects reaffirms what being a VSA volunteer represents and the importance that VSA places on building capacity development and host community empowerment. Presenting prospective volunteers with potential scenarios that they may face on assignment tests their motivation and willingness to carry on, explaining what is expected of them and what they may face in-country. Individual elements are certainly discussed. This is done, however, in a way that is connected to the host community, prioritising the roles that volunteers fulfil and the positive aspects they will experience during their assignment, more so than the individual awards that may eventuate in the future. Such approaches give prospective UniVols an opportunity to reassess their motives for volunteering if they are focused solely on their self-development, or misconceive what IDV is.

#### **7.4 Future motivations founded during, or extended from, the volunteering experience**

RQ #2 also aims to understand whether the motives that drive volunteers to join programmes change during their time in the field, and whether those motivations behind volunteering that



are carried into the assignment, or change during it, impact upon their future career choices. So far, this chapter has shown that there are a mixture of both altruistic and individual motives that have driven UniVols to participate in the volunteer programme. Although VSA do accentuate the positive individual rewards that volunteers can gain through IDV, as other global sending organisations that are driven by neoliberal mandates do, they also take steps in their pre-departure briefings and support networks to ensure that UniVols understand their development-focused agenda. To date, there is a significant gap in research around the steps that younger volunteers take after they have completed their assignments, and whether volunteering experiences influence their future decision making processes.

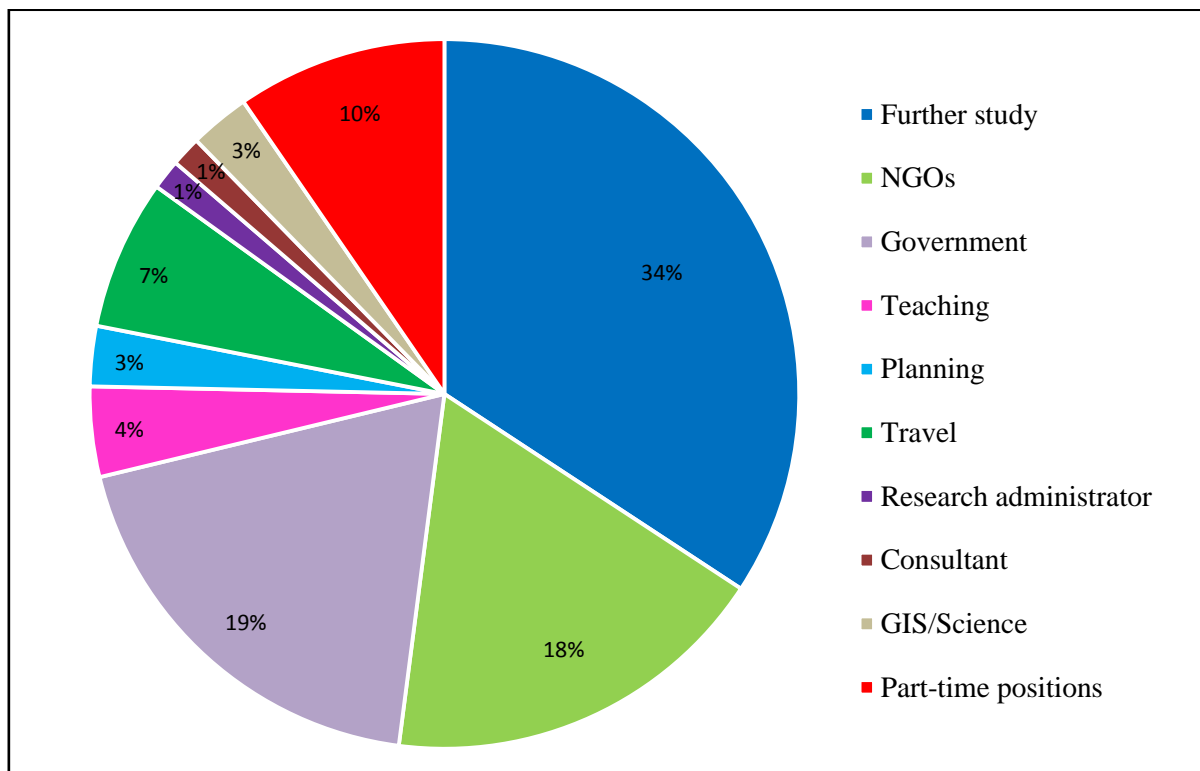
Participants were asked to detail what they had achieved career-wise following their volunteering assignments. Certain volunteers who were among the earlier cohorts of the programme in the late 2000s gave multiple answers, as some had fulfilled numerous roles and positions over that time period. Table 7.1 illustrates the occupational pathways that UniVols have chosen following their assignments, represented as a percentage in Figure 7.2.

**Table 7.1: Pathways taken by UniVol volunteers following their assignments**

Occupational pathways		Number of volunteers
Further study	PhD	2
	Masters degree	14
	Honours degree	1
	Postgraduate Diploma	3
	Bachelors degree	1
	Teaching degree	4
	Total: 25	
NGOs	Volunteering with VSA	5
	International NGOs	4
	VSA	3
	Other national NGOs	1
	Total: 13	
Government	MFE	2
	MFAT	3
	DOC	1
	Other government departments in NZ and abroad	4
	Local-body councils throughout New Zealand	4
	Total: 14	
Teaching		3
Planning		2
Travel		5
Research Administrator		1
Consultant		1

GIS/ Science	2
Part-time employment positions	7

(Source: Author's research)



**Figure 7.2: The future roles of volunteers as a percentage (Source: Author's research)**

### **7.3.1 Study opportunities, teaching, and the development industry**

The data in Table 7.1 and Figure 7.2, when compared with the motivational drivers that were identified in Figure 7.1 by UniVol volunteers, reveals two interesting correlations. The first relates to the number of individuals who chose to either continue their study following their volunteer experience, or to enrol in further postgraduate study. This again represents both individual and altruistic factors that have either followed-on from participant's original reasons to volunteer, or have altered because of the volunteer experience. The most common reason that UniVols gave for continuing their studies suggested that their volunteer experience had either increased the interest that they already held in development studies, or ignited their interest in those specific areas that they were volunteering in during their assignments. Certain participants expressed the empathy that they had developed for those communities, cities and countries in which they had volunteered, choosing to return to university to link their future study plans with research opportunities in their host countries. Further study not only increased volunteers' educational levels, but also provided a way for them promote the issues and countries in which they had volunteered and subsequently studied. It also demonstrated the interest that other volunteers had in furthering their

involvement within the development field (see Lough *et al*, 2012). These thoughts incorporate both individual and altruistic motives. Subjectively, the quotations below reflect an individual aspect of self-development and upskilling, through the benefits that volunteers believed they could gain from further study, yet also a commitment and interest to development, and their host communities.

“I am applying for a lot of jobs in ecology and development. In my head, as a result of this assignment, my ideal job would be to go into development with an ecological focus. Most likely I will need some postgraduate work, most definitely actually, but that is the end game for me... So I am looking at a university which has a Masters in that, so that would be ideal if I got the money to do that” KI 046 – ARB

“Even before I did my UniVol, I figured I wanted to do my Masters. My VSA assignment really helped decide what I wanted to do it on. But I also really wanted to travel, so I came back from my assignment and I worked hard to save up and I brought my ticket to the UK. I travelled and did a bit of work there, and then came back and signed up for my Masters, which is really good because one of the hardest things about the assignment is that you build up these relationships and a lot of people are used to volunteers coming in and that, and at the end of your assignment you’re like I’ll be coming back and things like that, but so many say that and don’t. You can see when you’re saying that, they are thinking well I’ll believe it when I see it. I knew I definitely wanted to come back for my Masters, and it was really cool to come back from the UK and let the guys know that I will be coming back.” KI 001 – Vanuatu

Certain volunteers continued their studies to gain the appropriate qualifications for fields that they were introduced to whilst in their volunteering capacity, most notably in the teaching profession. The seven participants who indicated that they had become qualified teachers, or were training to be so at the time, expressed an unequivocal connection to their volunteering experiences. This is emphasised in the quotations below. Understanding how teaching was delivered in their respective communities, and the importance that education held within these societies, motivated participants to commit to education and utilise the skills they had gained. Participants also noted that teaching was a successful platform to use both their educational and volunteering experiences together, to disseminate that knowledge back into the classrooms in which they taught;

“So I came back and trained to be a secondary school teacher. I was always kind of planning to be a teacher, but being a volunteer and particularly an un-skilled volunteer, if I use that term, I thought yeah teaching is a good thing that I could do that would be quite transferrable to different countries. So that kind of reaffirmed that I was quite keen to be a teacher. So I did that, then came back and I’ve been teaching since, and I teach geography which is cool because I can

incorporate lots of other countries and development topics which we look at. I have done a number of other volunteering programmes, mainly short-term volunteering stints. I did two months in Nepal training teachers and teaching, and two months teaching in PNG, and other volunteering in NZ. So definitely still engaged with lots of volunteering.” KI 016 – Vanuatu

“I came back and I had a year off, just working, and then I went back and did a Postgrad Diploma in development studies... I ended up heading to London and I spent three years living there, so I haven’t been too long back in New Zealand really, but I’m actually now going back to study for a teaching degree, and I do relate that back to my literacy experience in Vanuatu. Working with the kids has always been a strong memory and I’m sort of hoping one day that I can tie it in with the development studies that I have done, sort of teaching education.” KI 024 – Vanuatu

“I am now a full-time primary teacher, furthering my sign language to become specialised with that. These are skills I shared and learnt during the assignment. I wanted to make sure there was a connection from the assignment experience to the future to show the sustainability and worth of the assignment.” KI 039 – PNG

Individual goals are present in the above quotations, but show how the experience of working and living in the host community was valued by the volunteers. The positive experiences that were shared between the volunteer and host in these instances fostered relationships and capacity development among both parties. Host communities are not marginalised at the expense of the volunteer in this instance, as there are clear rewards for both stakeholders. The altruistic commitment to development in these instances, and how the programme was considered by participants, reinforces the benefits of the UniVol programme alluded to earlier in this chapter and in Chapter Six. Previous knowledge in development studies and a rigorous selection process can contribute to the quality of youth IDV assignments.

The idea of younger volunteers becoming development advocates and being moulded into the next generation of development specialists is also linked to the motives and career decisions of UniVols. The concept of global citizenship, and furthering interest in the development field through volunteering, is widely discussed and critiqued in IDV literature (see Chapters Two and Three). Figure 7.1, combined with the previous discussion around development education, reveals that a high proportion of UniVols became involved in development-related study, working for government departments, or working for NGOs, following their assignment experiences.

In regards to NGOs, there were UniVols who had volunteered with VSA itself on different assignments or with other sending organisations. Others had also worked for international and national NGOs in development-related fields. Interestingly, there were also three participants who had found employment with VSA, extending their connection to volunteering specifically. In terms of working in government positions, there were three participants who had found employment with MFAT, the development arm of the New Zealand government and the main funders of VSA. Committing to development-related careers and further volunteering opportunities indicates a mixture of both individual and altruistic motivations, which were either created or reinforced through UniVol experiences. Altruism is evident in the desire to deliver development and share skills through continuous volunteering, yet there are clear personal benefits to holding such positions, such as travel opportunities and gaining life experience. The quotation below shows how one UniVol's motivations to follow a development-related pathway was driven by their time in the field;

“While in the ARB I did worry about the future and what would happen next, but it's all kind of working out. I must say the experience of being in the ARB, being able to understand the issues happening on the ground from a personal level, I think it's really useful and at least in the career end I know what I am interested in now, so it was an all-round useful experience even though I didn't achieve much.” KI 011 – ARB

For most volunteers, the volunteer journey offered an opportunity to further understand aspects of development-related work, experiencing how partner organisations, sending agencies, government departments and development specialists interact and operate in-country. Gaining that practical experience and learning the specific skills that volunteering requires was mentioned by most participants as a motivating factor for choosing development-related career paths. For some, this echoed their motivations to join the programme that are mentioned in section 7.2.1. Participants in the quotations below reveal how such experiences became an intrinsic part of their CV's, where the individual benefits for volunteering also proved to be beneficial when they applied for job positions;

“Working in the ARB especially is really difficult, to get things done, but they can see I've had the experience through the UniVol project. So yeah if it wasn't for UniVol, I wouldn't have gotten this job then. The relationships with people, both donors and expats and locals, just being able to operate in the ARB is completely different to how you go about things in other places. I have a good grasp now and that was due to the UniVol stuff, so that was a big contributor.” KI 006 – ARB

“Yeah, I think I used it for... the interview style for most government departments is, they have some name for it when they ask you some question and you have to give an example of it. I suppose since I didn’t have that much work experience, I used my VSA experiences for at least one of those types of questions. I suppose that it’s pretty interesting for the interview that I had done something like that when I was applying for a graduate job, and I mean I got the job too so it must have worked [laughing].” KI 022 – Vanuatu

“Yep definitely. I got asked about what challenges I have had in the workplace and stuff like that, and the challenges I gave them were nothing that they could ever imagine. I never even got an interview for a job in New Zealand, but I got the first job that I applied for in Perth, and they said that the life experience that I had meant that I was just so much more employable and mature than any other graduate that they were interviewing. They were just pretty impressed with the commitment that you make.” KI 020 – Vanuatu

The individual and altruistic interests in this case can clearly co-exist, where achieving balanced outcomes for both hosts and volunteers is attainable. The number of UniVols entering into development-related employment, coupled with the number of individuals continuing development-related study, suggest that there is an aspect to youth volunteering, and specifically in the UniVol programme, that can motivate individuals to remain in the industry. Clear personal benefits for the individual are evident, through the rewards that working in development offers. Altruistic interests, where the passion for working with developing communities is clear, can also exist among those volunteers who have a future interest in development-related employment. Again, it is important that a focus on community capacity building, empowerment, and development is maintained over the interests of the individual volunteer and their career aspirations. In this instance, previous UniVol volunteers spoke in a manner that generally reflected the aims of their roles, with only a limited number of volunteers speaking solely about the individual career-related benefits that they had gained.

Overall, there is a wide variety of career pathways that previous UniVols have taken following their volunteering experience. For a small number, the volunteering experience produced a number of individual benefits, but did not have any noticeable influence over their career decisions. For those who were motivated by individual aims, value was found in the skills and life experience that assignments offered. This was considered to create a point of difference for volunteers, in relation to competing candidates in their career choices. By aiding their future career progression and life choices, it ultimately reflects how neoliberalism influences volunteering from a subjective standpoint; individuals participating

in volunteering for the purposes of self-development and self-care. The majority of respondents, however, mentioned a mixture of individual and altruistic motives, which were replicated in their future decision making. Participants were able to gain those individual skills mentioned, but at the same time expressed a level of interest and commitment to volunteering and development in general. For some, the volunteering experience shifted their individual outlook, to incorporate a more altruistic attitude towards development and their future career choices. Those participants used that motivation to pursue future study opportunities, to join development-related fields, or to forge careers in a way that was sympathetic to their volunteering experience.

## 7.5 Conclusion

In recent times, self-minded tendencies among younger individuals have increased as global society has progressively adopted neoliberal processes. Within volunteering sub-disciplines, this is no different. The volunteering experience is progressively framed towards what the volunteer can gain from their commitment (Rockliffe, 2005). IDV, whilst driven by rhetoric that promotes development and empowerment, is determined by neoliberal principles that force organisations to be financially profitable (Georgeou, 2012). Subjectively, neoliberalism emphasises the importance of the ‘individualised, self-regulating actor’ (Turken *et al*, 2016), where volunteering can be viewed as a way to foster self-development. This is visible through the marketing and recruitment of volunteers, where prospective volunteers are attracted by the individual benefits they can attain. This chapter has addressed RQ #2, exploring in detail what motivates UniVol volunteers to commit to the volunteering experience. Importantly, this chapter has also focused on whether initial motivating factors among youth can change during the volunteering experience, and how such constant or shifting motives influence their decisions in later life.

There is a significant amount of research on volunteering sub-disciplines that explores the concept of motivation in relation to the individual, but rarely does it connect this with other aspects. This chapter has, therefore, extended on the ideas of volunteer motivation to further understand the role that younger volunteers can play in IDV. What factors drive prospective volunteers to commit, what factors alter volunteer motivation over time, and whether such motivations are mirrored in the future pathways that volunteers choose to follow, have been discussed. The key findings of this chapter reveal that in relation to the UniVol programme, there are clear individual and altruistic factors that are tied to the motivations of younger volunteers. Overall, participants discussed in more detail the

individual factors that encouraged them to join the programme. Such self-minded attention mirrors the general societal trends of today, where younger people are increasingly focused on how they, individually, can develop and progress.

The educational experiences of UniVol participants and their interests in development studies, however, were the two common factors that fostered altruistic perspectives toward volunteering. Most UniVols were generally engaged and aware of the development factors linked to IDV participation, which encouraged them to join the UniVol programme and attempt to deliver development-minded volunteering assignments. The willingness of many UniVols to be involved in development and carry on similar work in future, was a key finding of this chapter. Those who were interested in furthering their studies in development-related subjects, or embarking on development-related careers, gained the self-development associated with volunteering, enhancing their entrepreneurial growth. At the same time, however, they were also concerned about delivering assignments that had tangible outcomes for host communities. The research data also reveals that the majority of UniVols were either motivated to continue their study for development-minded careers, or seek development-related or assignment-related jobs, because of their volunteering experiences. Certain participants already held aspirations to fulfil development careers before they volunteered, which were then reinforced through their volunteer experience. For others, their interest in development, or the specific field that their volunteering roles addressed, was created during their time on assignment. Working with communities in local settings changed the opinions of the majority of those UniVols who initially expressed only individual motives to volunteer, helping them develop altruistic feelings towards their hosts and become more connected with their volunteering roles.

The requirements of the UniVol programme, along with other stringent recruitment and briefing methods that VSA employs, attempt to ensure that the programme selects individuals who have an interest in delivering the type of volunteering it advocates. This research argues that these aspects of youth IDV programmes need to be strong, as they are important in selecting and preparing volunteers who are understanding of the principles of the organisation, and are aware of the overarching focus of IDV to support host communities. Sending organisations must acknowledge and manage the individual motivations of youth in a way that does not diminish host community outcomes. Emphasising development rhetoric in the preparation and recruitment of prospective volunteers, and the core philosophies of the organisation in its commitment to IDV, can



challenge the individual motivations of volunteers. Through this, younger volunteers can hopefully be more critical of the volunteering that they deliver, focusing not just on the individual benefits they can gain from the experience, but what they can do for partner organisations and wider host communities. Successful experiences and a sense of achievement in this area are shown to interest younger volunteers in following development-orientated careers. The UniVol programme has succeeded in recruiting volunteers who, for the most part, represent the key aims of VSA. Whilst benefitting from the experience they have had themselves, these participants have volunteered in a manner that is generally empathetic to host communities, demonstrating how motivation can affect the overall volunteer experience.

# Chapter Eight

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**The voice of the host: Perceptions of volunteers**

## 8.1 Introduction

Wider volunteering knowledge that exists today focuses predominantly on the individual volunteer and who they represent, the host sending organisation, civil society and their home nation (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011). Within the diversity of research on volunteering, there is limited attention given to the receiving communities and nations that support volunteers. Only in recent years has there emerged a popular interest in the perspectives of host communities, as researchers seek to challenge established ideas that often overlook this facet of the volunteering dynamic. Research by Lough *et al* (2011), Allum (2012), Perold *et al* (2012), Impey and Overton (2013), Hawkes (2014), Trau (2015), and the IDS Bulletin (2015) on volunteering and international development, begin to consider how various volunteering forms impact on host organisations and communities, and what eventuates from it.



**Plate 8.1: The Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) Bureau of Media and Communications, a VSA partner organisation based in Buka, ARB (Source: Author's research)**

It is for this reason that the host community voice is a key consideration of this research. The host community perspective is essential to consider when development and volunteering become aligned, as current IDV rhetoric around capacity building, skills exchange and empowerment promote the development of host communities. In previous chapters of this thesis, there has been considerable discussion that highlights the importance

of balanced outcome. How younger volunteer programmes can contribute within IDV, to produce mutual benefit for the volunteers and their hosts, is a central question to this research. This chapter will now address RQ #3, exploring the experiences of local stakeholders in order to understand the outcomes they experience, as well as their perceived value of the relationships they form with UniVol volunteers.

Initially, this chapter will utilise the data collected from interviews and focus groups with host organisations (see Plate 8.1 and 8.2) and community members to identify the major positive and negative aspects of being a host partner. The impacts that host individuals believe come from volunteer encounters, and how such impact has shaped their livelihoods and organisational capacity, will be discussed. From here, this chapter will then consider how sustainable these impacts have been for hosts, and how they value the volunteer experience in the long-term. Finally, this chapter will consider how youth volunteer programmes can incorporate host interests further, to establish assignments that ensure there is a valued outcome for those communities that support the volunteers. Overall, the chapter aims to show the importance of the host community voice, and how ineffective IDV can be, from a development sense, when programmes ignore host values.

## **8.2 Positive host UniVol experiences**

Throughout the field-based research, 30 individuals from partner organisations and wider host communities were asked a series of questions that sought to discover their perspectives on the volunteer experience. These individuals had come into direct contact with UniVol volunteers during their assignments. Host community participants were overwhelmingly positive in their comments concerning their volunteer experiences. This outweighed the negative experiences that were recounted, which will be discussed later in this chapter. For partner organisations, clear impact was witnessed in the training and upskilling of staff in the workplace, in organisational capacity, and in relation to the skills and cultural knowledge that host individuals were able to share with volunteers. Computer-related skills and language training were considered to be of significant value to both partner organisations and individuals. In relation to the volunteer, hosts believed that the adaptability of UniVols, combined with their open nature and willingness to learn, were endearing traits that enabled more effective exchanges. These points will now be discussed in more detail.

### **8.2.1 Staff training and upskilling**

A large number of host community participants alluded to the positive impact that UniVol volunteers had made concerning the training and skills development of staff in partner organisations. These were expressed by organisational CEO's, who had noticed a direct enhancement in the capacity of staff, and by employees themselves, who had gained such training from direct interaction with volunteers. Staff training and upskilling ties directly to the aims of VSA and other volunteer-sending organisations that are focused on participation, capacity building, and empowerment (Johnston *et al*, 2012). There is a strong focus throughout UniVol assignments in delivering capacity building, where volunteers generally work in direct consultation with a designated local counterpart (see Chapter Four). Working alongside staff and providing such capacity are subsequently interwoven into most assignment descriptions, focusing on particular skills that the volunteer is identified to possess, or that the organisation has identified as an area of need.

The large number of positive responses in regards to staff training, and other points that overlap with the upskilling of employees, further emphasise the successes identified in Chapter Six around developing skills-sets. The quotations below show how a basic understanding of skills related to computing and written work were valued by partner organisations. Comments made by participants also stressed the value of successful communication, allowing UniVols to transfer their general skills-sets more effectively. The success of transferring basic skills-sets has been well documented from both a volunteer and sending organisation perspective in Chapter Six. This point is enriched through the perspectives of the host community participants, who have identified the importance of adapting to more current and technologically-driven ways of operating;

“I think we have been blessed with VSA volunteers. Our first one was very useful in terms of training. When I first came here, the staff needed capacity building, and she was pretty good on teaching... The core skill here is basically computing, and their computing skills are really advanced and in that sense it's really helped us. For example, in 2014 none of the staff here knew anything about Excel, and the first one, she was very patient on training them. It took a whole year to do it, and now they are doing Excel and understanding emails, a lot of stuff on computing.” KI 059 – Samoa

Being in Santo and the staff there, a lot of the skills were computer skills. At the time we were using computing, and all the programmes, the volunteers always helped us to use them. One of the important inputs that I got from them was with the reporting, like helping me write the reports... Because they work with the peer educators, improving their approaches and skills when they go out into the community, how to deliver the workshops and getting their presentations and

using the right PowerPoints, making it look attractive and everything. So all these things, they really help us in the area of IT and reporting, yes... All of them come with different skills, all the UniVols that we work with, they come with different skills, and we created a very good relationship with them during the time here. We never had arguments with the UniVols, like they would say, oh this is what we do, and we would say oh, maybe we should do it that way, so we never had disagreements, we always shared and then explored our ideas” KI 080 – Vanuatu

“So I came in June last year, 2014, and since then I was working in these archives. Although it was very new, there was nothing really established, so [the UniVols] they had to figure out what to do... So when I came in, it was a good experience and they were also learning, so we just had to learn together... Since I did not come from the archives background or a library background, they were able to show me the classification system, and the good thing that I could recognise from the instant was that they had advanced computer skills, so that was helpful. They could show me what the data was about and all this, how to go about using it. So that was the first skills that they could show me.” KI 094 – ARB

For hosts, the adjustment to computer-related technology is vital, as it has become standard within global organisational operations. This allows organisations to connect with wider global networks and to streamline outdated systems, increasing their functionality and organisational capacity. For many employees, whose ways of living often do not afford them with the same opportunities that are awarded to volunteers, adjusting to computer technology can be extremely difficult. Roles in developing communities that have only recently incorporated the use of computers, computer programmes, emails, and the internet, can take a significant time to develop without adequate training and assistance. The impact that younger volunteers can make in this regard, who have grown up in societies where technology is used often, can therefore be influential. The ability to transfer capacity in computer-related and written skills at that base level, is shown in the quotation below to have made significant impact for particular individuals. Staff can operate more effectively within organisations, and future opportunities are opened for local individuals who develop wider skills-sets through volunteer interaction. The quotation below exemplifies how local individuals can access wider opportunities through their interaction with younger volunteers, utilising the skills-sets they can develop through interpersonal capacity building;

“The help that they give is both personal and work-wise. They really share information... and they open our eyes to see what is available outside and what we can use in terms of using the internet and everything. And yes, what we achieved together is helping back for me and my work moving forward yes... Like the peer educators, they were all encouraged and during that time they

really helped to apply for the Australia Pacific Technical College (APTC), and 6 staff went there. Before, they were just normal young people without any qualification, they had finished high school and they came, but now they have all gone through APTC, and they have a certificate for youth work, which helped them. I think now, one or two remain in the project and the others move out. One is at Save the Children, one is at Wan Smolbag in Vila. Especially English writing, all of us we are lacking this, and they help us. Showing us shortcuts on the computer and everything too yes.” KI 080 – Vanuatu

The large number of responses concerning staff training and upskilling indicates where younger volunteers’ contributions are valued. Similar sentiments are echoed by Lough *et al* (2011), who identify the benefits of technical and professional skills exchange. For hosts, who hold limited capacity in written and computing skills, there is value in building these skills through volunteer interaction. This can result in increased organisational functionality, as well as giving local individuals valuable skills that they can utilise in future. The need to build capacity in such areas can often be overlooked in larger development projects, as well as in more technical and specific volunteer assignments. Such skills can often be taken for granted, or assumed to exist in certain situations by development experts, organisations and volunteers, when in fact the capacity at this lower level may be limited. The host value placed on building up such skills in this research demonstrates where UniVols, and younger volunteers in general, can deliver clear outcomes through their volunteering experience.

### **8.2.2 Organisational capacity**

Supporting the broader organisational capacity of partner organisations was another positive outcome that host participants frequently mentioned in relation to their UniVol experiences. Organisational capacity is closely tied to the assignment objectives of UniVol volunteers. A large number of UniVol assignments were considered by hosts to be successful in delivering the capacity and support that they were established to do. For hosts, changes were noticeable in the administrative and managerial tasks that are imperative for partner organisation functionality; reporting, funding applications, building resources, as well as the way staff capacity had grown and how projects were progressing. Such changes concur with Perold *et al* (2012), who acknowledge that volunteers generally have the capacity to introduce clear changes to the functionality and performance of host organisations (see Trau, 2015 also). Host participants discuss in the quotations below how UniVols were able to deliver specific organisational tasks, which have had positive impacts upon the services that these organisations deliver to their local communities. The two latter quotations also show how

specific UniVols adjusted to their local volunteering environments, contributing in additional areas where the organisation required support;

“First, they help us with the education, so working with children and helping our teachers; they work together so they share skills. It’s been great, and they also then help us with some administration work and learning through play was a skill that was brought in, so we relied on them and shared that. I think we have a project that one UniVol set up in 2010... they also help us with fundraising also, and then we started an Optical Workshop here which is part of the fundraising, and it is still going and acts as an income generating project for the service here, and provides a service to the community too. A good number of people come in and get glasses... and also they teach us in-house and in-service, and they also go out with parents, and we also conduct training with teachers and they also are involved in developing training manuals, which we use to also train teachers. So they have been very helpful.” KI 090 – PNG

“When she was here, she was working along myself in 2011. That’s when I first arrived also, so I spent about three months with her and she was here for another 6 months. So what she doing when she was here was to help get the existing products up to a standard that is required by tourists. So she spent two or one month up at Champagne beach... she live there just to do some coaching and help develop... She also stayed at a place called Tuwok, which is just before Champagne beach also. They have bungalows there and she was working with the accommodation owners and also the communities up there too. It was very very useful and she did a great job according to the reports that I received. She helped out with the menus there for the restaurant, and with the pricings and how to do customer services there. There was a good positive response from the owners... Tourism is sort of like a new industry in Sanma province, this province. Apart from agriculture and copra, coconut and coconut oils, that is basically our traditional industries, and then five years ago we see tourism involvement and participation. So when she was here in 2011, what we did was try and encourage these people to go into tourism, and now you can see that we are not yet at the stage of tourism is big... but in 2011 we encouraged them to get involved. It is still growing now, but it is a long process.” KI 071 – Vanuatu

“Sport was not done properly here and then I took over at the beginning of the year, and he [the UniVol] came at the same time... Things have gone very well, students are enjoying themselves and they are playing in their classes during the week, and playing in their regional groups in the weekend. He came up with some guidelines to make a tournament, and we now have trophies and prizes and students know they can work to something, and it’s like we are building teamwork in the students. So, basically he just came for sports, but later on we noticed that he has lots of other skills as well. So other lecturers, they were utilising him to help. So he did some presentations on research, whatever he has from the university, he helped out, and I can say that he was very helpful in many different areas, not only in sports, but in his free time he is also assisting in lecturing as well. He did many different things and I found that most of the lecturers really like him and they even ask him in their free time to help, like to help with the computers as most of us are not very good in computing, and he used to help. So he is very helpful outside of sports, and most of the lecturers... and I can say that everyone has had a one on one and that he has done something



for them, he was very helpful in all other areas in the campus and that's one thing I noticed." KI 083 – PNG

The quoted comments above supply further evidence that supports the notion that younger UniVol volunteers were able to help develop a wide range of basic written and computer-related skills with counterparts and other host community individuals. These skills were perceived to be significantly valuable for those who were able to develop them. UniVols working outside of their direct assignment objectives and offering other skills that were useful to employees, as well as to the organisation itself, were believed to have positive ramifications for overall productivity, as well as for the volunteering experience itself. The large number of participants who commented on the positive communication and overall relationships they had developed with VSA, suggests that host input into assignment creation is common. This point is crucial to ensure that IDV remains focused on development outcomes and not solely on the experience of the volunteer (Trau, 2015).



**Plate 8.2: Samoa Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee (SASNOC), a VSA partner organisation based in Apia, Samoa (Source: Author's research)**

### **8.2.3 Reciprocal skills exchange**

Another important and positive facet to the volunteer experience that was mentioned by host participants was the knowledge they were able to impart to the volunteer themselves. In development literature, emphasis on the value of traditional knowledge systems has risen to prominence through the work of Chambers (1983; 1997), Richards (1985), and Sillitoe (1998). The incorporation of local knowledge, values and traditions is now considered to be

essential in delivering successful grassroots development projects. Host knowledge on local surroundings is far superior to external knowledge and, by respecting, valuing and utilising traditional knowledge systems, hosts are more likely to commit to projects. Empowerment among host individuals increases local involvement. This is, however, an aspect within volunteering literature that is not often considered, as host community perceptions remain limited. The value of the skills and knowledge that host community individuals possess, and how they are reciprocated through capacity development to mould the knowledge of incumbent volunteers, is very much a part of the volunteering dynamic. Recognising such assets and capabilities can help move volunteering from the neoliberal and modernist traditions, to recognise the potential that strong partnerships have in IDV (Impey and Overton, 2013; Schech *et al*, 2015).

With regards to the experiences of community participants and their association with UniVols, individuals in the quotations below identified how the sharing of their skills and knowledge was perceived to be a positive feature of their volunteering experiences. Teaching UniVols specific work-related skills, and sharing local customs and general life challenges, were considered rewarding experiences. These sentiments were shared among a number of other participants. Explaining to UniVols the workplace structures and specific systems that are used within partner organisations, was also mentioned among local respondents;

“Yes. We also teach him a few things, plenty of things he learned from us. He learned that on the farm we taught him how to make some knots. Because all of the time we used to sell cattle to the young farmers, so we have to make some knots to tie them, so we teach him that. We also teach him... also for make some what we call artificial insemination. We do that too here. There is plenty more but it's hard to remember... The culture in Vanuatu, we taught him a lot, like eating fruits like breadfruit and that. When we went walking out on the farm, we eat local food and he would come and join us and eat, and we talk *Bislama* sometime, and we go out and drink *Kava*, plenty plenty of things.” KI 075 – Vanuatu

“Like I said, she has been really busy. I have been sharing a lot of work with her, and she is also learning the life in the school, and we do have a busy work environment with the kids and getting the demands from the staff all the time. I know it's a headache for her, but she is learning to cope with the busy working environment, and she is learning sign language and the Samoan language, and she is learning a lot from other people also. Because people have different personalities so yeah.” KI 063 – Samoa

“To me, the UniVols, the three of them, they just mixed well with all the staff here in the division, they were really good. They knew everyone here, so they

made friends and also the divisional people in other offices were very happy to chat with them. They would talk about many things, talk about New Zealand, a mixed bag yeah. I have noticed that that type of relationship, the mutual respect among each other, is very good.” KI 094 – ARB

In acknowledging the skills and information that host communities have to share with volunteers, the stereotypical image of the western volunteer as ‘expert’ and the community as ‘passive recipient’ is challenged. This cross-cultural understanding can produce great benefit to both parties (West, 2011). Chapters Six and Seven identified that the organisational-related skills and experience that younger volunteers gained from hosts can be significant, boosting their individual skills-sets and their subsequent future employability. From a host community perspective, the upskilling of volunteers can also be positive as it creates a more equal volunteering dynamic. The idea of ‘mutual respect’, as mentioned by a local respondent in the quotation above, can foster stronger relationships and provide confidence in host individuals to interact freely with volunteers. Volunteers have a lot to learn in regards to the cultural values that host societies uphold and their way of living. If volunteers show an interest, respect and engagement in their assignments and in the host community, it can create a positive experience for the hosts who are connected to the volunteer. This is a point discussed later in this chapter.

#### **8.2.4 Volunteer traits that allow for a positive host experience**

Through their involvement of hosting volunteers, host community respondents were able to identify three main volunteer traits that they perceived to create positive experiences for their communities and organisations. First, the ability to adapt to different working and social environments; secondly, to express a willingness to learn; and thirdly, to be open and engage with locals. The adaptiveness and flexibility of UniVol volunteers has been well documented in Chapter Six from the perspectives of both volunteers and VSA staff. Combined with the positive comments made by host individuals, the importance of adaptation among volunteers becomes clearer. Those volunteers who can successfully adjust and adapt within local communities are more likely to deliver positive impacts for all parties in the volunteering dynamic. Host participants stated in the quotations below that UniVols were able to contribute in different areas outside of their original assignment descriptions. Their inclination to be flexible and work on various tasks led to further impact within the organisations and communities with whom they volunteered. Host participants also noted that being able to adapt to different cultural and work-related challenges enabled volunteers

to connect with the community, by gaining the respect of local individuals. This respect helped foster positive social and working relationships;

“I think when they were doing their orientation they were told specifically that that was what they were going to be doing, but when they got here, even though they did what they were supposed to be doing, there was also a lot of other responsibilities that we sort of requested them to do, such as training and stuff like that. They weren’t supposed to be doing training, but they did it really well. As I said, we really appreciate it. Their ability to adapt to different situations, that’s something that we really appreciated because they came in with a different view of what they were supposed to do and what they were briefed on, but when they came here we requested if they can do the extra apart from what they were doing, and they did really well. In fact, they did much much better in the new areas we asked them in terms of their attitudes and completing those tasks.” KI 059 – Samoa

“I think, given that they were only here for a year, they had to learn a lot, and most of the three UniVols adapted very well and very quickly. Especially one, he ended up speaking two or three different languages, and he was keen to learn languages. Because most of the people that we deal with, they don’t speak English and speak Pidgin or their mother tongue. I think adapting to our culture and the way we do things was crucial in terms of them working with us, and they were able to achieve after that.” KI 092, Focus Group 5 – PNG

The willingness of UniVols to gain knowledge from host organisations and individuals, was considered by hosts themselves to be a rewarding aspect to the volunteering experience. Showing this level of interest in the community and working alongside hosts, were reasons why hosts believed UniVols could build stronger connections. The quotations from two host respondents below argue that the way UniVols approached their assignments, acknowledging that they were not all-knowledgeable, and that they could gain a great amount from hosts, enabled stronger working relationships to be forged. Mati (2011) argues that hosts can be positively impacted by volunteer behavioural actions, where values and attitudes can transcend above relationships. Hosts were generally able to warm to UniVols, who came with the desire to learn the organisational and cultural processes in their respective communities. They were subsequently able to build the level of trust necessary to further relationships and achieve assignment aims. Themes around the strength of relationships are explored in-detail in Chapter Nine. This again emphasises the importance of cultural adaptation, connection, and community involvement, highlighted in Chapter Six. How the volunteer expresses themselves and interacts with hosts essentially determines how the host will respond to the volunteer.

“She was prepared to learn as well at the same time. She didn’t assert herself as in a normal situation [like with other volunteers]. She knew where she was coming from and working with locals, she was really good.” KI 086, Focus Group 4 – PNG

“The younger ones fit in nicely because they are still learning. They were approachable and understood straight away because they were students and learning. They were a bit more flexible, whereas the older volunteer was a bit more forceful telling us how to do it. I guess we would prefer volunteers who understand what we are trying to do, and a bit of our culture, and maybe understand how we see things. It’s a Third World country and we are still developing, and there is a lot that we still need to pick up. The younger volunteers are more useful and also I think we can work along together.” KI 091, Focus Group 5 – PNG

Host perspectives also identified the importance of openness among UniVols, when trying to foster relationships with hosts. Participants discussed in the quotations below how their previous experiences with older volunteers were generally premised on more formal working relationships. These were considered to not foster any real sense of trust and friendliness outside of direct work-related business, which led to more rigid relationships. The younger UniVols appeared more innocent to host respondents, in the way they conducted themselves. This encouraged locals to view UniVols more as equals, fostering stronger friendships. The ability to interact in such a manner is attributed in Chapter Six to the social livelihoods that younger people live, combined with their relative inexperience in work-related environments. The host respondents below considered these factors to increase the opportunity for positive interaction, as the relationships became more natural and trusting. This allowed hosts to open up to volunteers. Having trusting relationships can be particularly important in settings where certain cultural attributes or past experiences may make host individuals initially reserved and apprehensive of volunteers. The quotations below begin to discuss how reluctant hosts can be when they are unfamiliar with what the volunteer represents, or when they maintain a distance from their hosts;

“What I would say is that the UniVols, the three of them, they are very open and have a very outgoing personality. It makes it easier for communication, and they are very helpful. If they see that I need to know something, they offer... they are open to discuss what there is to be discussed or what needs to be done... I have noticed that they are very respectful and they are keen to listen to what we have to say, and then we have created that harmony where we can just do things in a very cordial way.” KI 094 – ARB

“So we would share ideas and discuss, and they are open to things and they are supportive. They will give their ideas, but they don’t push it like the older ones.”  
KI 080 – Vanuatu

“I think to students here at campus, she was always smiling, she was friendly, she was open and she could talk to anyone here; that was one particular bit which I was inspired by and students also gained from her... Here we have got three groups of volunteers, like JICA, VSO and VSA. I think younger volunteers, they are open and associate themselves openly with anyone. They do not have boundaries, but with the older ones, you probably see them as much more important people and they don’t open themselves up as much, it’s a more formal relationship.” KI 082 – PNG

“One thing I noticed where he was so influential, was that he came down to us and was very close to us, and then he made us open up to him. Not only me, but other staff in the department and he was so approachable, if you compare to VSO, JICA and the Nigerians who came here. These two [UniVols] are very open, and one thing I notice is that they try to understand everybody and came down to be like us, and we opened up and everybody tried to get what we could get from them. Whereas others, they were too far from us, so we also keep far from them. If any volunteer who comes in can bring themselves closer to us, by being friendly or anything like that, it allows us to open. One thing about Papua New Guineans, we are shy to seek help. I really wanted to get help from people, but it was them who was making me not want to go and seek help. But these two that is one thing I notice, they make it easier for me to go and see them.” KI 083 – PNG

Overall, there are a number of different approaches that volunteers can take in the way they deliver their assignments. For UniVols, the three major characteristics that host individuals valued were related to their adaptability, their openness, and their willingness to learn from hosts. These factors ultimately created a distinctive volunteer experience for hosts, which was in some cases very different to their experiences with older volunteers. These positive experiences noted by hosts confirm a number of successes identified earlier in Chapter Six. It is, however, important to acknowledge the opinions of hosts separately in order to emphasise the significance of the host voice in the volunteer dynamic. How hosts perceive the volunteer, and what attributes can establish stronger relationships to assist with assignment delivery, are essential in delivering IDV programmes that stay true to their development principles. Without host contributions, volunteer programmes could continue to display neo-colonial traits for which they have been strongly condemned in critical volunteering literature.

### **8.3 Negative host UniVol experiences**

Although the perceptions of host participants were generally positive in nature, five common issues were identified by hosts during the volunteer experience. These issues are considered to be negative in nature, owing to the way that they limited the effectiveness of the volunteer, negated the outcomes of the assignment, or personally affected hosts. This may have been through issues in connecting with the volunteer, or certain characteristics that volunteers portrayed that may have offended or concerned host individuals. Comments specifically related to the volunteer were more frequent than any other organisational issues that were discussed. For certain host organisations, their experiences with specific UniVol volunteers, compared with other volunteers who they had met and worked with in different years, were markedly different. This was often tied to the varying attitudes and individual characteristics that each individual volunteer possesses. Organisations which recently had negative volunteering experiences, as opposed to those who had issues many years previously, were able to recall their experiences more clearly and provide considerably more detail. It is also important to note that some of the issues raised were considered to be more problematic than others, with participants stating that overall, certain issues were more a suggestion for the future, rather than impacting on the entire experience in a detrimental manner.

### **8.3.1 The challenge for host organisations to fully utilise UniVol skills**

One major challenge related to the organisational experiences of CEOs and employees, and the desire to make the most of the individual skills that the volunteer possessed. For some organisations, it was argued that there was a lack of communication between themselves and VSA on the possible contribution that the volunteer could make, how they would deliver the assignment objectives, and the distinction between a UniVol volunteer, and the regular, older volunteers in VSA's other programmes. The issue was considered to reside with the sending organisation, who could ensure stronger communication and greater clarity in what the UniVol volunteer could offer the partner organisation. Issues were also identified in the partner organisation itself, which could possibly make further efforts to understand the volunteer's attributes. These factors are raised in the quotations from local respondents below. One interesting point, raised in the last quotation, relates to the host organisation not having staff or direct counterparts in place to work with the UniVols. This again indicates a lack of clear communication between the sending organisation and the partner organisation when the volunteer assignment was actually formulated. Such issues concur with Allum (2012), who identifies in his research that a high percentage of partner organisations did not utilise their younger volunteers effectively, owing to similar circumstances.

“So you know having the UniVols for just under nine months... for me it’s the department, ok, like six months orientation like that is too short and we need to understand better how to utilise this tool coming from New Zealand. We know that there is potential that would not have been captured in the terms of references, or that we think may be useful in other departments. We know they come with multiple skills and, as a head of department, I would like to see where we can use some of the extra skills, so the engagement for this particular office has maximum value. It takes a while to figure out what skills they have. So that is what I did with the last UniVol. Based on my experience from the first and second UniVols, I was able to engage her on different programmes because I was able to assume that this person probably brings with her all these other additional skills.” KI 093 – ARB

“Well the challenges is like, it’s not a great challenge, but that there is many things to do at the same time. Just imagine that I am teaching 8 classes, and at the same time student services, so I am busy and most times I think that way and this way, my mind is here and there, so one thing that I like most from them is that they really help out. But I don’t have the time sometimes.” KI 081 – PNG

I think one of the things that is probably a challenge of having volunteers here is having good locals in place as well, who can work with the volunteers and work with them. Sometimes it doesn’t always happen like that, and over the recent months we have had some challenges up in our Santo office, having not just counterparts, but senior staff who can manage the volunteer arrangement. But I think that’s more an issue on our organisation and stuff.” KI 071 – Vanuatu

The sentiments expressed in these above quotations very much echo the problems raised in Chapter Six. This confirms that communication issues are the responsibility of both the host organisation and the sending organisation. Adequately preparing host communities for younger volunteers is essential (Allum, 2012). Clear communication and appropriate support systems are vital measures to ensure that younger volunteers have the best opportunity to provide useful contributions when they volunteer. It not only ensures that they themselves gain the most out of their time volunteering, but creates an environment where the likelihood of the partner organisation gaining tangible outcome increases. What the host receives through IDV assignments should remain a priority over the rewards that the individual volunteer can gain.

### **8.3.2 Short assignment length**

An issue raised among host organisations relates to the length of UniVol assignments. Assignment length is something that has been directly questioned within volunteering literature, particularly within the limited literature around host community perceptions. Arguments suggest that longer assignments are likely to lead to more tangible outcomes (Lough, 2011; Johnston *et al*, 2012; Tiessen and Heron, 2012; Hawkes, 2014; Howard and



Burns, 2015; Schech *et al*, 2015). Host respondents argued that increased benefit may come from assignments if additional time, perhaps an extra six months to a year, was available to build upon the capacity that had been established in the assignment. Twelve hosts argued that in their experiences of hosting UniVols, volunteers were just beginning to make progress in certain projects as their assignments were coming to an end. These opinions are exemplified in the quotations below. Outcomes could be wider reaching for communities if volunteers were in-country for longer periods, to expand on the work that they undertook;

“Just my opinion, I have shared it with VSA too, that I think next year if we have a volunteer, if they could extend there could be changes to the duration. Because it seems to me that ten months is too short. For example, with our UniVol, because she has a background in theatre and we have had talks with Wan Smolbag in Vila that we will try, with her assistance, to have a theatre group here in NCYC. And ten months is too short, and if I think it was about 20 months then I think that would be good. Also for a UniVol, ten months is not enough for the UniVol to build their skills and experiences as well.” KI 074 – Vanuatu

“Ah, I always say when they come to the end of your assignment, that sometimes it’s just good to sort of assess if they really had an impact or not, because they just come for one year, not even one year maybe just 9 months, and once we start to think of all of these good ideas and planning, then it’s coming to an end and they really don’t see what it’s going to put forward for the one next year, coming in and coming out... New UniVols will come with their new ideas, so I think the challenge is that time is short for them to really see through and have a positive view of what they do... It’s the same with the other UniVols, because three months they will be trying to learn the language and understand and try to settle in and find their way to help us, so that was really the challenge.” KI 080 – Vanuatu

Outside of direct assignment-related objectives, certain host participants believed that the social relationships formed between individuals and hosts were not able to reach their full potential, due to the assignment length. The first quotation, in particular, talks about the quality of the relationships that were formed with the particular UniVols who their organisation hosted. They postulate about the impact that these younger volunteers might have had if they were in-country on longer assignments;

“No, they are saying they are going back and they are only here for one year, and I say, why don’t you stay for one more year and just finish your work here. Maybe the first year they come, we have this and that, but the second year after developing everything; in the new year we could work together and improve things. To me, ten or eleven months is not enough. Two years will work well. After the year programme, we work together and we want them to continue and build and improve again. It’s sad as you build this relationship in ten months and

then I don't think it's long enough. They have the right to go and see their family as well, but one and a half or two years would be good." KI 083 – PNG

"Yes, I think it's a little bit short, basically because when you look at the length of involvement, the six months at the beginning is what you call orientation, its them trying to understanding what the workplace is like and the culture of the place, and the different relationships. So what can you do with the remaining three months? You are subject to the situation that is already here to guide you, and what we would like to see is them contribute more, since we are contributing to their knowledge building. So I think it would be good to extend it from under one year to two years or even a year and a half." KI 093 – ARB

Interestingly, whilst two host respondents did raise the issue of assignment length, they were still appreciative of the work that their respective UniVols had achieved within their organisations. These comments align more closely with the data collected from UniVols and VSA staff members, who suggest that the programme provides sufficient time in the field to carry out the majority of their assignment objectives (see Chapter Six for more detail).

"Yeah we wish. Because in that nine months they are like settling down, and another year would be like consolidating what they have done. But we have been very fortunate to have those two, and they have managed to complete their tasks right on time as well." KI 059 – Samoa

"I don't think it is long enough, and they could have been here for a bit longer. But on the whole, they have accomplished their tasks and myself and the students and the whole academic staff have appreciated their stay here and also the older students as well." KI 085 – PNG

Hosts' perceptions of assignment length again stress the importance of establishing strong communication and having balance to the assignment dynamic. Understanding what the younger volunteer can offer, and then engaging in dialogue, both before and during the assignment, to ascertain the progress of the volunteer and the needs of the partner organisation, can help ensure good outcomes for the hosts. Host community perceptions around assignment length, however, suggest that there is indeed an imbalance in the way UniVol assignments are established, favouring the needs of the volunteers more than the communities where they volunteer. This is an issue that needs to be discussed frequently with hosts, to establish assignment lengths that suit both parties. As Chapter Six concludes, UniVol assignments generally tend to succeed in working with all stakeholders involved. If host needs are more carefully incorporated and assessed regularly through the assignment

process, then the potential for assignments to address the host needs more closely may increase.

### **8.3.3 Issues with volunteer adjustment, selfishness, and inexperience**

In relation to the characteristics of volunteers, only certain minor issues were identified by hosts. This again may relate to the limitations of the research, owing to the number of host individuals that were able to be interviewed at the time of the field-based research. Those host participants who were included, however, presented some salient points worth consideration. Participants identified that with certain UniVols, issues around their life and work experience, as well as certain selfish tendencies and the challenge of adjusting to local environments, led to a number of minor challenges for the hosts. Adjustment and adaptation are points that appear throughout critique within a number of different youth volunteering disciplines (see Chapters Two and Three). Certain hosts argued in the quotations below that such factors led to specific UniVols experiencing difficulty in their adjustment to local environments. Factors like UniVol homesickness, a lack of time spent away from home before coming on assignment, and a general lack of life experience, were considered to add extra challenges for hosts;

“I think the only negative thing with that was that she was homesick for the first few days, because it’s the first time she has been away from home. That’s the only negative I am thinking of. I tried my best to make her feel like home, which makes it easier for her, and from then on now whenever she has problems, she goes I’m so happy I have got you, you know she always shares with me, which makes me feel so good.” KI 063 – Samoa

“We tried to provide an environment that would suit our staff. So we try and be very welcoming to our volunteers, make them part of our family. Because we call ourselves a family, so we bring them in and we nurture them. Of course, they usually have a week or two weeks orientation before they join us, but most of the time, if it’s a volunteer that’s here, a professional person, they don’t take much they just need to settle in. For a UniVol it’s a bit more because it’s a new working environment and so forth, but usually it’s good.” KI 066 – Samoa

Whilst these problems were negligible across the entire UniVol programme, they are important to consider in the wider youth IDV context. Such factors can be a burden on partner organisations when they are extreme in nature, which negate any potential outcome for both stakeholders. Kirillove *et al* (2015) argue that in this sense, the quality of the individual volunteer can significantly influence the outcome for hosts.

How experienced the volunteer is, also links with such issues. A small number of hosts remarked in the quotations below that they had to make adjustments in the way they worked with UniVols. This was in clear contrast to their previous experiences with older volunteers, who required less guidance and were generally more experienced. Whilst this may increase workloads for host organisations, it again is a factor that can be avoided with effective communication and assignment establishment. Lopez Franco and Shahrokh (2015) come to similar conclusions when identifying how a lack of experience and self-interest can undermine youth volunteering. Chapter Six has considered the different skills-sets volunteers offer. From the host perspective, however, these quotations reinforce the necessity of providing clear understanding of younger volunteers' skills and roles, so they can contribute effectively toward the partner organisation.

“Ah, she is very proactive, so she is always wanting to do things. Other times it has been hard because a lot of the stuff I have to do myself, but she is always wanting to do things and sometimes it gets quite slow for her. But then she can go over to others and help out with some stuff.” KI 068 – Samoa

“Well for skills wise, you understand VSA volunteers are not like UniVols where they are... VSA volunteers are much older people and many are at retirement, so they are here to pass on the skills with us, compared with UniVols, they are young. So skills wise, much more experienced. But with our UniVol over here, she did know things, but skills and experience you have to get along the way.” KI 071 – Vanuatu

Finally, a comment made by one participant in the quotation below discussed the selfish tendencies of UniVol volunteers. This was in regards to their desire to gain experience and skills during their assignment, in order to further their studies. The motivations of volunteers have been covered extensively in Chapter Seven, but it is interesting to note here that it was limited from host perspectives. Other participants identified that UniVols do indeed benefit from their time spent with their partner organisations and the skills they can give to volunteers, but only one individual perceived it to be a negative aspect. This individual noted that the UniVols they had worked with appeared to be more interested in personal gain, as opposed to contributing to their partner organisations. The sentiments in the quotations below echo the discussions in Chapters Two and Seven about the impact that neoliberalism has in volunteering; how self-development of the neoliberal subject becomes heavily incentivised in the free-market approach, owing to limited state involvement and an emphasis on entrepreneurial growth;

“I think the New Zealand volunteer programme to the ARB brings a lot of things. One, we have observed that they have respect for Bougainville, its experience with the crisis and its culture and so on, they have respect for us. They have the spirit to assist and help us, even though they have different expectations, but they have learnt to accept what is available for their purpose and what is not, like small things like a proper office or good internet access, or good transport links. So different expectations, but I see the difference between both of them is that the older ones provide more leadership and experience, because they are drawing on experiences from the past to try and guide us. Whereas the young ones, they have different energies. They are more focused on their academic skills, and wanting to gain from that. But there are others who want to explore what is available for them, and maybe helping to form their career, and then there are others who want to assist, but at the same time look for opportunities to gain new knowledge... One UniVol was probably more focused on their studies and coming here was part of trying to complete studies back home. They were really focused on what could be gained, and when that was not available, they felt a little bit down” KI 093 – ARB

Chapter Seven argues that sending organisations need to focus on recruitment and pre-departure briefings to ensure that volunteers are not just volunteering for their own personal interests, but have considered how the volunteering assignment aims to benefit hosts, and how they can contribute to that. This is something that is important to establish with younger volunteers during pre-departure, as an overt self-focus can negatively impact host perceptions and experiences. However, the host perspectives in this specific research were most often positive in nature, which illustrates the generally positive experiences that hosts have had with younger VSA volunteers.

## **8.4 Making volunteer impacts sustainable for host communities in future**

Another important aspect to understanding the impact that volunteers have, is exploring how sustainable volunteer assignments are. The perceptions of hosts on this issue of sustainability can add further understanding to the value of youth IDV assignments for local communities. In the efforts to address RQ #3, it is important to explore how sustainable hosts considered UniVol assignments to be, in the years following their completion.

Sustainability is an essential element to IDV assignments. Development ideals imbedded within IDV around capacity, shared knowledge and upskilling, aim to deliver self-sufficiency, sustainability and empowerment for host recipients. Yet tracking sustainability, or in essence achieving eventual self-sustainability among hosts, can be challenging. The number of unpredictable shocks that developing nations can experience, makes

organisational sustainability increasingly problematic. How the host individual utilises those skills in future, who else they impact, and what potential life challenges can inhibit their future pathways, all create such problems. This is why academics have stressed how current neoliberal measures within sending organisations fail to explore the value in social impact and individual exchanges (Georgeou and Engel, 2011; Georgeou, 2012; Lopez Franco and Shahrokh, 2015; Turner, 2015; Baillie Smith *et al*, 2016). Quantifying volunteer outputs essentially ignores the power of local-level interaction and the potential reach of such exchanges. There is value, therefore, in considering the community perspective and encouraging qualitative discussion around their perception of worth and sustainability. This can reveal how community members retrospectively view their volunteer experience and what they value from it. The benefits from longstanding relationships, as well as the sustainable impact of the volunteers' work relating to organisational and individual capacity, are two important points to consider. How these factors influence the future livelihoods of host individuals can add to the depth of knowledge surrounding host community perceptions of IDV interaction.

The objectives that were carried out by UniVol volunteers, within respective partner organisations, were believed to have sustainable benefits for hosts when administered correctly. Those that failed to do so, exhibited the issues raised earlier in this chapter, as well as in Chapter Six. These were linked to a lack of communication, as well as adverse characteristics of certain volunteers. For those UniVol volunteers who were able to successfully accomplish their projects, both directly related to, and outside of their specific objectives, there were undoubtedly longstanding impacts for host communities. The following quotations show specific examples where longstanding benefits were achieved;

“We had a UniVol, she was here for ten months in 2013. For a start she came and set up our donor database, in no time she did that, and then she became involved in our activities of proposal writing... She started working with another lady, but then she took off and another came in, so then she spent a bit of time with her, especially on the database, and did a bit of computer training also.” KI 086

*Were there any other skills that were shared or other things you learnt?*

“Just the computer skills and the proposal writing skills...” KI 087

“Those are really important, and obviously she had an assignment guideline and that’s what she carried out. All in all, I think she was very helpful, very very helpful to us, especially in the project office. She did a proposal for funding, and this is a bit about what has been achieved. For one, she did a proposal and submitted it to the Digicel Foundation, for a mobile health vehicle. It was successful also, and now there is an ambulance, which is now a long-term impact for the hospital and the community.” KI 086, Focus Group 4 – PNG

“One UniVol showed me play, one of the educational ways which I can help my students, especially with disabilities and engagement, and the relationships we build with the normal kids and the disabled kids, and also the parents who are coming in to engage with us in different games. It was part of our educational activities in the school. We had another who also came up and introduced us to the computer, having skills in computing and skills in making the fundraising done for the centre. That was very nice. I learnt a lot from her, because she was the one who started off the project, and after she left, we built the optician place at Callan Services, that was her project. It was initiated, but all of us were taking part in the project making, and she was the person behind the arrangements and doing all the negotiating and the proposals and everything, and the project still going.”

*And it's still ongoing? That's great.*

“Oh yes, she was the one who did it for us, and she was really smart. So we started it off and after that we have financial assistance from different companies around East New Britain who support us with the building, and now it is operating. So we actually get customers around PNG who give their orders for glasses, so that is where we usually cut the glass and everything, and we started off with her.” KI 084 – PNG

One of the more effective means of achieving sustainable outcomes with hosts extends from the relationships that are formed between individuals. Interpersonal collaboration is an important factor within situations where sustainable outcomes are identified by hosts. The quotations, both above and below, show how skills are interchanged between one another and how hosts have been able to carry those skills forward in future. This may allow the organisation to be sustainable if staff remain there, or allow the individual to further their careers in other roles where they can utilise such skills;

“And I think she left with great pride in what she achieved, and it's something that we take our hat off to New Zealand as well, especially the VSA programme because without that kind of support... and I told the last two VSA's that the seed that they have planted here, they don't realise now, but mostly in the next two or three years these staff have something to start off with and now what we are doing is developing advanced training for them. But it's started from the VSA people.” KI 059 – Samoa

*In terms of the work they have done, has it been quite beneficial?*

“I believe so yes. It has helped the local staff especially who are in charge of the programmes. It has helped them with skills and delivering the programme to our communities. I think some of the people that we have had that worked with the volunteers have moved on, but there are one or two who remain with us who are running the programmes they had when they had the UniVols come over.”

*So some have been long lasting then?*

“Yes. I mean one staff member is in Japan at the moment, he has gone a long way with the waste management programme, and works closely with JICA, that's why he is in Japan at the moment on a course on waste management. So he

does work with schools and local communities who live close to Smolbag. Two UniVols were working with him initially at the time, and they planned a lot of the work together, getting the school kids engaged in waste management and environment-related awareness... We also had one who worked with the literacy programme, she trained some of the local staff we had at the time. I think they have moved on now and we have hired new people who have come on, but the programme still continues and it benefitted a lot from having an English speaker in place to help with the programme.” KI071 – Vanuatu

The immediate relationships formed during assignments allow for more sustainable outcomes for hosts in the future, as capacity can be shared in a more relaxed and trusting manner. Conran (2011) suggests that the more intimate the encounter, the more authentic the experience is for hosts, which is more likely to produce a sustainable impact. Broader ideas around the power of relationships will be continued in Chapter Nine.

How sustainable the relationships that are formed remain, however, and whether exchanges are ongoing post-assignment, are altogether different questions. Considering the impact that immediate relationships have had during the assignment process, the potential that maintaining such relationships have could be of significant value to host communities. Continuing contact can permit the flow of ideas and capacity between individuals long after the volunteering assignment ends. Both volunteers and host participants were questioned about the sustainable nature of their relationships and whether contact was long-lasting. This prompted a variety of responses. The majority of host participants stated that they had maintained contact with volunteers following their assignments, mainly through the use of social media and other internet platforms. However, as time went on, contact became limited in certain situations. The quotations below show that most often, the nature of relationships post-assignment tended to be friendship-based. Host participants identified that there was limited capacity building or skills sharing with returned volunteers as the years following assignment increased;

“Yeah we still keep in touch with her on the emails.” KI 062 – Samoa

“I am friends with her on Facebook and I think the last time we communicated was a while ago as she is busy and I am busy with a lot of other stuff. We had another volunteer but he left two years ago so it is only me in this office by myself now.” KI 071 – Vanuatu

“Yes a couple of them yes, but just on Facebook. When they are here, it’s only when they leave that we start Facebooking and say hi and ask what is happening. The last three UniVols, yes, we just stay in touch on the internet... Also some



locals yes. Workwise, I am not too sure about that now, but they keep in touch with some people every now and then.” KI 094 – ARB

For certain hosts who live in relative isolation, the difficulty in accessing such technologies to establish communication links can limit their contact with UniVols after their assignments. Other barriers for hosts, such as technology costs, changes in employment, and family circumstances, can also alter the value of sustaining contact with volunteers. Such relationships may not hold the same significance as they did during the assignment period. Ver Beek (2006) reveals similar patterns to his study, where locals identified missed opportunities in continuing the relationships they established with volunteers.

For those who do keep in touch, however, the lack of engagement in the subsequent years is interesting to note, considering the positive responses that were made about the volunteer experience. The chance to share skills and maintain relationships, which have the ability to be mutually beneficial, were possible for the majority of hosts and the UniVols they met. This raises the question of whether certain relationships that are forged between host individuals and UniVols can reach their full potential from a development sense. Such ‘broken bridges’ can indeed cause disappointment among hosts (Zahra and McGehee, 2013). There were a small number of positive examples, however, where hosts expressed how important and sustainable the relationships made during UniVol assignments had become. The quotations below show that this was particularly true in instances where UniVols had returned to visit their communities, in some capacity, after their assignments. A number of volunteers had carried out research projects where they had volunteered, or had returned on other volunteering assignments, or for holidays, to renew their connections with the individuals they had met during their volunteering experience. Others had also maintained strong relationships from a distance via the technological platforms mentioned previously;

*So the relationships you were able to form were quite strong then?*

“Oh very strong. Like the first UniVol I had, we are still contacting and when the cyclone came, my friends, the UniVols, they got together to collect funds and then sent them over, and I used that for the families, like my family and the families in Tanna, so that was how special it is for us and me. They are my family yes.”

*So that works really well, like you can trust one another?*

“Yes... I think their time here was special, and that’s why they give for people... sorry I am quite emotional about it, it means a lot to me. Straight after they check to see if we are all OK, and asking me if the other staff were OK, and they make sure that money they send, I give to some staff and ex-staff that are here that they

worked with. It was a very strong relationship and I even promised one UniVol that if she gets married, she has to invite me and I will save up. So I just learned that she got engaged and I said yes, when is the wedding. I really want to see them.”

*And it's great that you are still in touch with volunteers also.*

“Yes. I think all of them I am. My husband went to study in Australia for one year and he met up with a former UniVol and they talked and he said oh I miss talking *Bislama* and it's nice to refresh it and stuff. We went for his graduation also and I said I have to meet you again and he said, oh yes, I have to drive you around Sydney, so he took us on a tour around there and we talk *Bislama* and its was very nice. So we are still really close. We don't email every day, but we keep in touch every now and then.” KI 080 – Vanuatu

“Yeah most of the time, as they are really good in *Tok Pisin*, so we usually have a conversation in Pidgin with them. Like my husband, most of the time they email him. Sometimes he will call me down to the Centre just to see the email and respond to them. I really loved working with them because of how they talk to people, they were very polite, and the engagement. Even our PNG food, they were very welcoming and they got involved with anything that we were doing, which was really nice for us.” KI 084 – PNG

“I think for some, there are still strong relationships there, even after their postings. One came back a couple of times after his placement here, and I think he ended up working in an environment programme back in New Zealand, and then he came back with a couple of others to work with his former counterpart in the schools. Another came back a year or two ago and was doing some research or something, I can't remember, but the contacts have remained after the placements.” KI 070 – Vanuatu

The sustainability that is evident in the above quotations reveals how strong connections, if maintained, can continue to have a positive impact on the livelihoods of hosts and volunteers. Enduring links to partner organisations and individuals can help in times of need, where shocks have impacted on livelihoods, or continue reciprocal skills, knowledge and friendship exchanges. From the host perspective, the overall volunteer experience is clearly enhanced and more substantial when links are sustained over time. This is exhibited clearly through the raw emotion that was displayed in an interview with one participant, who explained in detail how influential UniVols had been on her livelihood, and in times of need for her family and the wider community. In general, the continued bonds expressed in these examples were considerably stronger than in other examples, where circumstances had led to occasional greetings and a general cessation in the volunteer-host relationship, even when the relationships were considered to be strong during the assignment process. These relationships were more common among those UniVols whose assignments were in the earlier years of the programme's history.

## 8.5 Conclusion

Without careful consideration of host needs (their experiences, expectations, and understandings), IDV programmes become indistinguishable from other volunteering forms that are criticised for repeating neo-colonial power and subjugation, portraying the volunteer authoritatively above hosts (Moore McBride *et al*, 2006; Coghlan and Gooch, 2011; Bailey and Russell, 2012; Howard and Burns, 2015). Previous chapters in this thesis have acknowledged the dearth in research around host communities and how they perceive the volunteering experience. Even though in recent years there has been more interest in this area, there still remains a substantial lack of knowledge across different volunteering sub-disciplines and case studies that seek to understand how the host community is impacted by hosting volunteers (Raymond, 2008; Perold *et al*, 2012; Burns and Howard, 2015). This chapter has explored the views of partner organisations and community individuals to understand their experiences of hosting UniVols, and what they value from working with younger volunteers. This discussion has directly addressed RQ #3, emphasising the voice of the host and contributing to the overall aims of this research.

The common positive and negative experiences with UniVols, as perceived by hosts, have been explored to determine whether community perceptions align with the experiences of volunteers and the sending organisation. For hosts, their experiences of working with volunteers were overwhelmingly positive in nature. Host individuals and organisations identified that they had gained valuable capacity from UniVols, organisational aptitude and individual skill development that had made an impact on their roles and livelihoods. Considerable value was found in the ability of UniVols to willingly share core computing and written skills. Those who shared such skills in an open and considerate manner were able to gain the trust of hosts with whom they worked, furthering their impact. Although limited, the negative experiences stressed by hosts provide valuable insight to determine how best to utilise younger volunteers in the field. Negative implications were weighted towards poorly conceived and supported assignments, which failed to allow the organisation and the volunteer to work effectively toward assignment goals and capacity development. Maintaining community interests is important to reach success. The compiled data in this research suggests that this is something that the UniVol programme has achieved relatively consistently in its assignment delivery. Further dialogue between partners and VSA, however, could ensure that UniVols have the best chance to volunteer in an environment

where the partner organisation is clear about what the volunteer offers, and what they are realistically capable of achieving (Hawkes, 2014).

Ensuring IDV is ‘demand driven’, tailored to the needs of the community, requires greater influence from hosts (Moore McBride *et al*, 2006; Palacios, 2010; Lough, 2011; Lough *et al*, 2011). This offers the best platform to build competent relationships during the process of the assignment, with the potential to forge more sustainable relationships in future. For hosts, the notion of sustainability through the work that UniVols achieved was again generally positive, with organisations and individuals acknowledging that the assignment objectives and outside skills they had gained would have long term-benefits. Host perceptions must be considered more regularly, however, to understand the needs and aspirations of the community. These steps can help ensure that the benefits of assignments reach further than the development of younger volunteers’ aspirations, as well as the managerial and financial directives of the sending organisations.

Hawkes (2014: 71) states that the “engagement of the host organisation as an equal partner leads us to the organisational supports and barriers to the achievement of capacity development outcomes by international volunteering”. Sustainable relationships also have strong potential in what they can deliver in the future, following the conclusion of assignments. This is perhaps one aspect that is rather short-sighted among younger volunteers, who may proceed with other life adventures, slowly losing their connections with hosts. This chapter identifies glimpses of what sustained relationships can produce, and the value of such relations to hosts. Considering the benefits of maintaining connections, is therefore something that could be further discussed in volunteer briefings and other educational processes, especially among younger IDV volunteers. Overall, the need for balance when establishing assignments cannot be overlooked, as host input and previous experience are both vital in ensuring that IDV programmes can create cohesive and beneficial assignments. Respecting the ‘agency’ of hosts can make the experience for both younger volunteers and the communities they work with more fulfilling, ultimately leading to positive and sustainable change (Perold *et al*, 2012). How important relationships are in fostering positive change will be considered in more detail in the next chapter.

# Chapter Nine

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## **Local-level relationships**

## 9.1 Introduction

For volunteering to contribute to human development and progress, it must start with the relationships that volunteers can form (Aked, 2015). This statement is indicative of discussions in previous chapters, revealing a connection between strong relationships and successful assignments. In Chapter Six, the successes and failures of the UniVol programme were discussed from the perspectives of VSA staff and UniVols, identifying the conditions and attributes that enabled younger volunteers to be most effective in their volunteer delivery. Within this, the development of interpersonal relationships and understanding were connected to capacity building and assignment success. Strong community links, working in close relations with partners, and fostering friendships throughout the community, were also discussed in Chapter Eight. The perceptions of local partner organisations and individuals were examined to understand how host communities viewed their UniVol experiences. Developing relationships with volunteers was considered important. Reciprocal learning, equality in working relations, and a sense of connection have enabled hosts to accept volunteers into their communities. Successful capacity exchanges and assignment success were more frequent in such scenarios.

Understanding the potential of relationships in more detail, and how they shape the volunteering experiences for stakeholders, has therefore become an integral element within this research. What successful interpersonal relationships can generate, will add to knowledge that considers where younger volunteers can be at their most successful working in IDV. This chapter will begin by discussing what local-level relationships can deliver when they are developed successfully. How variations of social capital foster empowerment and effective change within relationship dynamics will be central to this discussion. Bridging social capital, networks, trust and reciprocity, and developing close bonds will be considered in detail. These facets of social capital will show how younger volunteers can effectively utilise local-level relationships to ensure positive impact through volunteering, and the conditions required to do so.

The challenges to relationship building will then be discussed. What limits younger volunteers to connect with host communities, and how it impacts overall assignments, will also be explored. Overall, this chapter will argue that relationship building can be a valued aspect within youth IDV volunteering programmes. The increased impact and outcome that is delivered through interpersonal connections can ultimately challenge the current managerial processes that drive IDVs today, drawing attention toward the interplay between

the host and volunteer. This discussion will contribute to the identified research gap around the value of relationships within youth IDV, adding further knowledge to the impact that younger volunteers can potentially have in their volunteering experiences.

## **9.2 Building local-level relationships: The value of social capital**

Examples of social capital are evident within the established local-level relationships that UniVol volunteers are able to form on assignment. Social capital refers to the ability to build civic partnerships and sociability among individuals, to provide resources, support networks, and skills to enhance livelihoods and general well-being. Chapter Three detailed the theoretical concepts of social capital, noting the limited association between IDV, relationships and social capital in recent research. In its essence, the power of social capital is inherent to the quality of the relationship, and what can be achieved together. Social capital can ‘illuminate’ the impact of social relations within development projects, prioritising personal growth and development (Barraket, 2005; Measham and Barnett, 2008). This chapter will now consider the value of interpersonal relationships in more detail, exploring the four key elements of social capital that were raised by research participants.

### **9.2.1 Bridging and bonding social capital**

Social capital is commonly considered in its dichotomous ‘bridging’ and ‘bonding’ forms, where bridging social capital sees links developed with external actors outside of the bonded networks found in families, communities and tight-knit groups. In the relationships formed between UniVol volunteers and host community members and organisations, the naturally occurring forms of social capital are bridging. The volunteer acts as an external influence that enters into partner organisations and host communities, establishing relationships with individuals. Individuals can then either build on the bonded forms of social capital that exist in communities, or establish unique bridging forms that allow the volunteer and host individual to exchange various forms of capacity (see Perold *et al*, 2012; Howard and Burns, 2015). The power of this bridging social capital is dependent on the quality of the exchanges and relationships that are built (Bebbington and Carroll 2002).

The volunteering dynamic provides a “unique vantage point” to develop such exchanges, as volunteers and hosts are positioned to see each other’s views and experiences when working in parallel (Streeten, 1997; Crabtree, 1998: 187). Successful relationships that harness social capital can influence change, support people and encourage competence and empowerment (Aked, 2015). When questions regarding relationships were posed to research

participants, the overwhelming response was positive in nature. Only four out of the 54 UniVol participants argued that they were ineffective in their attempts to connect with the local population and foster relationships with individuals, both in the workplace and within wider society. These challenges are considered later in this chapter. Within the formed relationships, there were instances where bridging social capital was effective at the community level. The quotations from key informant interviews below exemplify how certain UniVols were able to utilise the power, resources and skills that had been formed in bonded community groups and organisations, to contribute their perspectives and knowledge. The bridging social capital that was subsequently formed in these examples created opportunities for these relationships to effect change, influence direction, or connect with other networks;

“Yeah, definitely, as I stated I had a really good relationship with my neighbours and my co-workers, but I developed a really strong bond with Rotokas ecotourism who I did a lot of trekking with, and subsequently they were looking for a volunteer at the time so I slotted in there after I finished my assignment... When I sort of came involved with Rotokas, at that stage they were just friends of mine, but there was a bit of capacity building there. I helped them with their funding application and with some planning that they had to do before their assignment started...One of my former counterparts is coming to see me tomorrow about something that I am going to help him. I have just got back into PNG a couple of weeks ago, and I am committed to another role now, but I am committed to assisting my former colleagues. They are applying for a new volunteer, but in the interim I am very keen to stay involved and helping them and keep building their capacity in a few areas. Whether it’s just a few days a month or so.” KI 006 – ARB

“Yeah, I guess the relationships that I built with the Mothers Union were probably the most productive. They already had some skills and energy, mobilised through their own social capital among themselves that they were prepared to put to work on community-based projects, and they already had a general idea of the things that they were interested in, which were basically things that improved the future prospects of their children. So getting to know them, and then understanding why I was there, who I was essentially, and what I could offer meant that we became pretty effective partners. Basically they decided that what they wanted to do, and I contributed as much as I could to helping them out. The ideas and the energy, the *kaupapa*, generally came from them and not me, and they put in a lot of energy to in this case raise the awareness of rubbish disposal and sanitation, and ecosystem conservation when it came to edible marine species. So that was really productive. And the same goes in the same way, to a lesser extent perhaps, to the youth group. They had challenges with their own social capital. Their membership had declined a lot because they had a new leader who hadn’t built the trust and social capital within his own peers, to make him as useful a partner as the Mothers Union were. So I think that illustrates the importance of social capital which I was able to garner and mobilise, but also the social capital which they were able to garner and



mobilise themselves that made them able to utilise me as a partner.” KI 042 – Solomon Islands

The above quotations represent particularly successful inputs from UniVol volunteers, who were able to form effective relationships with their partner organisations and other community groups. Through these formed relationships, the bridging social capital that was created helped to mobilise resources, and the bonded social capital that already existed, helped to influence change and development for the particular groups and organisations involved. The attributes and skills of the younger volunteers aided these changes.

Within UniVol experiences in general, however, the impact of bridging social capital at the lower individual level was more common. This was again evident through the specific interpersonal relationships that were established between volunteers and hosts. Although exceedingly more difficult to quantify than the clearer community-level impact of the previous examples, the majority of UniVols were nonetheless able to form relations with individuals, who were then able to share capacity and skills, creating benefit among both stakeholders. Devereux (2008) argues that volunteers are well placed to deliver capacity building on account of the way they work side by side with each other. Examples of such capacity exchanges have been exemplified in previous chapters, particularly in the areas of computing, written skills and language skills. These skills were developed through relationships and working alongside each other. Volunteers in return were able to gain culturally-specific knowledge, as well as improving their organisational function through added work experience and skills development. The ability to instil relatability, competency and autonomy among hosts through relationships are also important in volunteering exchanges (Aked, 2015). The quotations below illustrate a situation where established relationships were able to foster bridging forms of social capital, leading to psychological and physical outcomes for hosts and volunteers. Physical outcomes relate to the tangible skills that hosts can utilise in future, such as writing and computer skills;

“Well the computer teacher and I was always pretty scared of him because he was from the Polynesian island of Vanuatu and he was pretty big and wouldn’t talk, and he would always come into the room and slam the door and I was like oh this guy doesn’t like me! Then I found out that he was really scared of me, because he was a tutor. But eventually we became quite good friends and would chat about stuff. He was always up with technology and stuff, so he had Facebook on his phone and stuff, so we would help him out with stuff like that. Eventually, I started going to meetings for the studio that was attached to the youth centre, and he started to be interested in that. So I told him about it and he started coming along with me to these things. I was given minute-taker, as that’s what I was told to do, and he expressed interest in it. So we started doing that

together and typing that up together sometime during the day when he was free. I think that was something that really built his capacity in being able to take minutes, write them up and put ideas together. That was kind of unexpected, but definitely a good one.” KI 051, Focus Group 1 – Vanuatu

“I’ve got one relationship with a guy there who is going to help me with some of my research. He is a local ni-Van whose family own a big plot of farming land, and he is very much on board in helping improve agriculture in Vanuatu through education, and local ni-Van roles in agriculture. There have been a couple of times when we have discussed things on a more skills-sharing perspective. It’s cool to maintain those links. It’s part of my research, or part of the aims of my research, to address the aims of western ideas on how agriculture should be developed in Vanuatu, and ni-Van ideas on agriculture development and education. I want to support ni-Van agricultural development, so it’s good to have someone to reflect my ideas off of and check if it’s on track.” KI 001 – Vanuatu

“Yeah in particular one guy that I worked with, he named his kid after me and I have got a little namesake, so I would send him emails and we would be in touch monthly. They had a big cyclone come through this year, and I think I was in Peru I think, but the first thing I did was call him to see if he was ok and stuff, so I had a pretty good relationship with him. Every time I go back, I will meet him at the airport and go stay with him. Then there was another guy that I worked with, who I probably didn’t hang out with as much socially, but he has been a really good contact with some of the work we have done with sustainable coastlines. When we went over, he came with us on the tour for a few weeks and did a lot of the speaking, and we have kind of got a working relationship with him which is really good. So I catch up with him on Facebook and emails and just ask him how his work is going and stuff.” KI 022 – Vanuatu

Such examples of bridging social capital can lead to a variety of different opportunities both during the volunteering assignment and in the following years, if the relationships remain sustainable. Opportunities are not only present for the host communities, in terms of capacity development and involvement in various projects, but for the volunteers themselves, who can gain skills and revisit communities to continue working and social relationships. Building the interpersonal relationships required to produce these forms of social capital are more common among socially-minded volunteers, who are willing to work alongside individuals more equally (Weisinger and Salipante, 2005). These are traits that UniVols, and younger volunteers in general, are considered to generally possess, as noted earlier in Chapters Six and Eight. The impetus and specific characteristics that the volunteer possesses, combined with the stability of the assignment environment that they enter, can accentuate the potential that lower level relations can have for both host individuals and volunteers. It is important to note, however, that certain conditions in host communities can also impact on the quality and depth of social capital that is fostered. As

mentioned in Chapter Six, there can be different cultural practices across various nations, tribal groups, and communities, which may influence the type of relationships that can be built. Chapter Six discusses identifies certain issues related to gender and age, which affected the connections that UniVols could form in certain communities. In Papua New Guinea, for example, cultural values concerning the interaction between volunteers and hosts who were of a different gender, created different relationships to those in other countries. Yet it was evident that for the majority of UniVols, their various forms of inter-community relationships and bridging social capital were essential to delivering their assignments.

### **9.2.2 Networking**

The possible networking opportunities that can be delivered through relationship building were evident within certain relationships that were formed between hosts and UniVols. Networking can be provided through bridging social capital when the external presence (the volunteer in this instance) can build links within the host community, understanding existing societal structures, and then identifying opportunities to connect individuals or partner organisations with other groups, associations, or government institutions. For UniVols and other volunteers, they are already predisposed to networks in communities. They represent both VSA and their respective partner organisations, who have links with multiple organisations, government offices and wider communities. Utilising existing networks, or establishing others, relies implicitly on the strength of relationships built between individuals. They allow the formation of trust and understanding, to connect volunteers to the community and expose them to local networks. If volunteers attempt to create new networks between groups, gaining the respect and trust of local individuals to do so is imperative.

Dale and Newman (2008) suggest that no stand-alone community has the internal capacity to implement sustainable community development. They consider networking to open opportunities for the development of collective agency (Dale and Newman, 2008). Without the bonds that relationships form, volunteers are likely to be ineffective in the networking they attempt. Local individuals and organisations can ignore volunteer efforts when there is a lack of trust, becoming apathetic toward the volunteer process. This can also be true when previous external influences and networking attempts have negatively affected hosts, making them less likely to commit to attempts by other volunteers. Understanding the embedded cultural practices in specific communities and the role they are likely to play in forming relationships is also of importance. UniVol volunteers have been particularly

effective at forming local-level individual relationships with hosts. The three quotations below show how fostering relationships has allowed volunteers to become immersed within local networks. These volunteers were able to identify facilitative opportunities where they could support individuals, connecting them to other networks to assist capacity building and skills development (Lough *et al*, 2011; Lough *et al*, 2014). Participants told of the bonds that volunteers had formed with hosts, who were then able to identify opportunities and utilise the networks they were involved in, to connect individuals, associations and groups to greater opportunities that could benefit both parties;

“The thing that springs to mind was while I was there, there was an expat family that were really interested in creating an opportunity for live musicians, creating a place for them to perform and things like that. They approached me because they saw that I worked at the youth centre and they knew there was a music studio there. They offered this opportunity and there were about 4 bands at the youth centre who wanted an opportunity, but there was no relationship at all between the expat community and the youth centre. I was able to facilitate conversations and meetings between the two, and, because I had been there for six months at this stage, and had built up that trust with my friends at the youth centre and the staff there also, they were willing to open up that dialogue with this expat family. By the end of the year, they had established a programme, and the bands were going to play at their hotel and stuff. That relationship is still there now and they have set up a whole other music programme for it. Some of my best friends live in Vanuatu now, and at work by the time I left, the peer educators and I were tight, and they were so excited in getting their new volunteers for next year. They just wanted to pick up where we left off, and they completely understood the role of VSA in the community after that and they knew what we were there for. Not just that, but because we had built up such a good relationship, they would spread the word on what volunteers could do elsewhere and stuff. There were Australian volunteers going into work at Save the Children I think, and one of the colleagues at the youth centre went up to work at Save The Children, and they always thought that her transition was so much easier, because they had heard how helpful a volunteer could be and really embraced her, whereas if she maybe had arrived a year earlier, she may have been in the same position as I was. I think I just made friends, and that was the best thing you could probably do.” KI 020 – Vanuatu

“Sharing knowledge and sharing opinions on things just comes naturally with friendships, but it’s hard in the particular culture as well, as you don’t address things directly. So one thing I have really struggled with is the treatment of children, hitting children is a regular thing and is used as a threat as well, and that is something I find hard. In terms of when I hear that, it’s a cultural thing and I have been told this directly that you can’t just say no that’s wrong, well you could but people wouldn’t appreciate it. So the thing is finding other ways around it. So I went to a workshop on child protection, and I met a local man who spoke about positive discipline, and I have his contact details now to come and do workshops, so maybe that is one example of trying. I have this one person who I am really really close to, and I have spoken about how these issues have troubled me, and I guess that is one way to do it as I have seen his family do it,

but you have to find other ways to get to it... Sometimes it can be when you speak *Bislama*, as a huge barrier is broken down. *Kava* drinking [a traditional drink (see Plate 9.1)] is also a good way to speak to people, but really that is it, apart from if you happen to form a relationship with a family here, which I was lucky enough to have been able to do.” KI 045 – Vanuatu

“Well the work that they were doing with us with the festival was outside of their scope of assignment. We were a different organisation and they would even go out and worked a bit with Rotary, and they networked with other organisations for us. Because we had lots to do and they had more time, and also because they were good English speakers, they could network with businesses as well for sponsorships for festivals and that sort of thing. More people are into it in some ways. UniVols, just because I guess they have more head space and it’s not so specific [their assignments] so they are more open to other ideas.” KI 072 – Vanuatu

Joining existing networks and working within them, or extending the individual or organisational capacity by tapping into other networks, can be beneficial for both the host and the individual. Whether that be through connecting organisations with opportunities that lie outside their current scope, connecting with families for cultural immersion and reciprocal skills exchange, or linking with individuals to explore the opportunities to improve livelihoods, such networks require trust and strong relationships to have influence and effect. The research data from interviews and focus groups suggests that UniVol volunteers have been particularly effective in fostering such local-level relations during their volunteering experiences, which have led to networking opportunities. The quotations above reveal that some of the core positive characteristics that UniVols exhibited in Chapter Five, specifically their strong social skills and their ability to show empathy and understanding toward local cultures, on account of their development knowledge, were valuable in building such networks. Understanding the power relations that may be in place within certain communities and their cultural practices, and how volunteers can work with individuals within this space, is indicative of the networking that can be created. Fostering strong relations at the local-level is ultimately where younger volunteers can have their greatest impact, witnessed through the by-products of such relations. Built networks can also extend outside of the direct assignment, offering future opportunities if volunteers either return or remain connected to the host community in some form. Overall, networks can be an influential aspect of volunteering, but hold their true value when relationships are fluid and there is a clear understanding and connection between the volunteer and the host.



**Plate 9.1: A local Ni-Vanuatu man prepares *Kava* using traditional methods (Source: Author's research)**

### **9.2.3 Trust and reciprocity**

Building trust and fostering reciprocal exchanges are important social capital elements that can result from successful interpersonal relationships between volunteers and hosts. If relationships can nurture mutual trust as they grow, hosts can feel empowered by the volunteering process (Butcher, J., 2003). This can increase the likelihood of more impactful, reciprocal and sustainable experiences (Pratt, 2002; McWha, 2011; Schech *et al*, 2015). The importance of trust has been discussed at length in relation to social capital and the strength of ties in Chapter Three. The act of ‘doing together’, trust and reciprocal skills exchange encourages individuals to succeed, helping local actors to feel supported in trying new things (Aked, 2015: 32-37). Relationships and social capital function with minimal impact if the understanding between the committed stakeholders is void of trust. Individuals are less likely to be open and committed to one another (Picken and Lewis, 2015). This is evident in the neo-colonial critique of poor development projects, where ‘experts’ enforce inappropriate development schemes on communities without strong working relationships and adequate consultation. Development projects that lack effective community links and have short-term

staff placements, generally fail to deliver sustainable schemes because of a lack of local buy-in (Potter *et al*, 2008).

Volunteering can also replicate neo-colonial issues through short, volunteer-focused programmes that feature continuous volunteer turnover and a lack of obligation with the host community (Perold *et al*, 2012; Schech *et al*, 2015). Yet it is acknowledged in literature that volunteers are well placed to avoid the negative connotations associated with development workers, due to their local-level positions in the community and the nature of their work in capacity exchange, working at the interpersonal level (Watts, 2002; Tyler and Walter, 2006; McWha, 2011; Turner, 2015). How trusted and accepted the volunteer is, in their connection to the partner organisation and the individuals they associate with, was proven to closely correlate with the successfulness of the overall assignment in UniVol examples. Trust was raised in discussion with participants from all facets of the volunteering dynamic. Ten UniVol volunteers identified how the relationships that they had fostered during their volunteering experience had led to further opportunities for both themselves and their hosts, once familiarity and trust had been established. Chapter Eight considered the value that was placed on trusting relationships by host communities, and how being open and wanting to learn together enabled hosts to be more open and trusting in their relationships with UniVols. Such openness correlated strongly with the importance of cultural understanding, and understanding the cultural aspects that could affect relationship building. The benefits that trusting relationships created, are expressed in the quotations below. How further capacity development and individual progression can increase, when volunteers are connected and trusted in their volunteer settings, is discussed;

“I think with my colleagues definitely. While it felt like I wasn’t doing much in the first six months, I think I actually was in terms of building those relationships... That really helped, and following six months once I built those relationships, you were right, like staff would come to me and talk to me about anything, but it definitely helped because you would see gaps where help was needed, or they wouldn’t be afraid to ask for help. So I ended up doing computer courses, and before they wouldn’t even want to ask for help, but we would sit there and do it and spend hours just practicing typing or things like that, and they were really embarrassed at their skills and I said no I obviously sit at a desk all the time and you have never done that, and I think developing good relationships was really a big part of what made my assignment successful, it was really helpful... Even just doing the workshop on play and things like that, I did that after six months after I knew the language and they felt comfortable to take me out to two rural communities for two weeks. We tested for eye and ear problems at school, and worked with kids with disabilities there, so they were comfortable enough to take me out there and I could speak *Tok Pisin* by that stage so they were having me out trying to address the audience, which was quite interesting,

but it helped as well because they knew that I wasn't afraid to go out to these communities as well." KI 040 – PNG

"At my workplace there were very few women when I arrived, and there had been one older VSA woman volunteering, but before that they hadn't had any female volunteers. So that was one of the big things when building relationships, having all these men working there and then a young lady coming in to help. A week into my stay I made ginger crunch for my colleagues and all of a sudden we could have morning tea together and talk to each other. Slowly in a way there was like a wall that could be taken down brick by brick... I'm a bit shy and can be quite a self-conscious person, and I was aware while I was there that anyone who came out of the blue to talk to me, they must have been using so much courage to do so, so I needed to make time to talk to them." KI 008 – ARB

Trust evokes confidence within the relationship dynamic, allowing both parties to be more open to one another and establish 'safe interpersonal spaces' (Aked, 2015; Howard and Burns, 2015). The quotation above exemplifies this. As levels of association increase, "repeatedly mutually beneficial interaction" can strengthen trust, reducing individuality (Georgeou, 2012: 41). Ultimately, learning more about each other, and understanding individual beliefs, cultural practices, and values, is essential building trust. In volunteering, this can help to identify the true needs of hosts and create more conducive relationships, where appropriate capacity building and skills exchanges are enacted. The value of trust was also noted by VSA in-country staff, who had witnessed certain UniVols form strong community connections. The quotations from staff below show how this enabled UniVols to achieve in their assignments and in the community. Individuals who were unable to connect with individuals on a personal level, struggled to gain trust among hosts. This can restrict outcome and negatively influence the volunteering experience.

"[Trust] is needed because I have seen a lot of people come and go, and without having those relationships, everything falls over. I think some people arrive here thinking, well I am white, so I should be respected for that. We don't expect that in our own country and you have to build up respect, and one way of doing it is actually joining the community and not in a false way, I have seen that happen, but in a genuine way and caring for things. And it depends also on which way you want to go, like with sports... or getting out into the community and building relationships. Church is also a good way of making those connections. And once [local] people find out, and they do here as the beating of the drums go pretty fast here, they know who they can trust, and I find that when I am actually talking to locals here, I say to them why do you trust this person and they say because they have come and joined the community, you know, we know them and they don't just come to work and tell us what to do, they actually join the community. Then once you have got that trust, and it's not as easy, as some people think they can come in and within two months they can have that trust, which is not the way it works, it takes months to get that trust and its bits by



stages, and then all of sudden things are a lot easier and everyone is *Wontok* to everybody here.... So the relationships to me are actually more important than some of the objectives in the assignments, because if you don't have those relationships then those objectives are not going to work." KI 095 – ARB

"So saying to the volunteers that you just need to get alongside people and do it as a friend and build up trust, or if you try to challenge people on things, but you don't have the trust yet, you are just going to get shut out and you are not going to get invited to meetings. Nobody will talk to you anymore, so you have to do it as a friend. UniVols make more friends locally, it's a lot easier for them to make that change. So with these young women, I think befriending young woman here, UniVols have done a lot in building up that confidence and help them see ways they can deal with situations like that and doing it as a friend, and I think that is a huge impact for those individuals. You have to get a lot of trust, and again that is a challenge with ten months, because it takes ten months to build trust here, but the UniVols can do it with younger people and it can happen a lot quicker. And role modelling, they are able to role model it a lot better because they work alongside people and just the way they approach situations and the way they are in relationships and how they respect themselves, that is role modelling that I think can be quite powerful. Not just preaching, or this is how we smart white people respect ourselves as women, but living that with them and seeing those challenges. Because young people wear that on their sleeves a lot more and are dealing with a lot more personal stuff that the older people may not be." KI 076 – Vanuatu

Breaking down barriers, which can exist in countries that have been plagued by colonialism and constant development interventions, are one of the major strengths that relationships in volunteering can bring. Volunteers who are capable of forming trusting local-level friendships and relationships have an increased opportunity to deliver the level of capacity building that IDV aims to provide, immersing themselves in the local community and constructing sincere links. This concurs with Jacqueline Butcher's (2003) research, which argues that close personal relationships are important in creating positive well-being and personal growth for both the volunteer and host. This is enhanced through continual communication, being in close proximity to community members and prioritising mutual contribution and reciprocity. Learning about each other, and adjusting to the different cultural practices that are present, are essential in building connections. As the above quotation suggests, younger volunteers, as revealed in certain UniVol experiences, have characteristics that enable them to connect with different societal groups and build unique bonds with hosts. Heightened sociability, a candid volunteering attitude related to limited life and work experiences, and faster cultural immersion, have allowed certain UniVols to form trusting friendships and open opportunities for reciprocal skills exchange.

Hosts are more likely to engage with volunteers and impart their skills and knowledge to those who exhibit an openness and honesty in their exchanges. Volunteers who show respect and understanding of local cultural practices and beliefs, and engage with hosts, are also likely to form trusting relations. The depth of capacity exchange in volunteering experiences is, therefore, reflective of the strength of relations, with trust being a focal element that can increase output and impact (Lough, 2016). Ultimately, once trust is established, the real value lies in mutuality and reciprocity, which can foster long-term support for hosts (Palacios, 2010). This is an aspect that UniVols have been strong in, connecting with host communities in various forms and fostering trust among hosts. This has often resulted in effective outcomes for both parties.

#### **9.2.4 Friendships and the strength of ties**

The one final aspect tied to local-level relationships and social capital is the close bonds and friendships that are formed between individuals. Personal relationships can be very rewarding and motivating for those involved. Ultimately, when volunteers are able to form strong local-level relationships and friendships with individuals, the potential for harnessing and utilising social capital, networking, trust and reciprocal skills exchanges becomes higher. As such elements in the relationship develop, so do the ties to one another. Participation, empowerment and ownership can increase among hosts when feelings of solidarity and commitment to one another expand, as opposed to formal relationships where such connections are limited (Aked, 2015).

Participation in volunteer programmes arguably increases opportunities to build friendships with hosts (Kay and Bradbury, 2009; Horn and Fry, 2013; Kirillove *et al*, 2015). In regards to this research, Chapter Eight revealed that although most relationships did not remain strong in the years after assignment completion, or decreased as the years past, there were examples of very strong and enduring bonds between UniVols and hosts. Palacios (2010) argues that intercultural relationships can be more than just isolated encounters, holding significant value when they blossom into actual friendships. For those participants who formed strong friendships among one another, their experiences were extremely positive in nature. The potential to network, build trust, and enable reciprocal exchanges grew to a level where open discussions and increased activities led to greater skills exchanges. Those UniVols who were socially active in host communities, spoke of more rewarding assignments when they mentioned the close bonds they formed with hosts. This was in clear contrast to those who did not have similar experiences. They were revealed in

Chapter Six to have increasingly negative views toward their overall volunteering experiences. The quotations from participants below show how sharing knowledge, life experiences, cultural characteristics, and work-based skills through friendships at the interpersonal level, created a more rewarding impact for both the volunteer and host;

“I had one really special relationship with someone. Once I jumped on board the high school transformation project, there was a Timorese facilitator who was overseeing it all and we got quite close. When I first arrived, she had just got pregnant, and a month before I left she gave birth to her baby, and that was a really neat experience. She invited me to her house and it was just amazing. Just sharing different stories of what pregnancy would be like here compared to what it’s like for them. That was the main thing I took away from it was that my relationship with her, actually seeing her baby grow every day and stuff... It was really good to just compare things. She had spent a bit of time in Melbourne, and even just in the office working together we would have *Tetin* speaking days and English speaking days, so we each got the opportunity to practice speaking each other’s languages and stuff which I think was really neat.” KI 007 – East Timor

“Yeah, I keep in touch with them. After I left, they were all able to use Facebook and stuff. So we talk through that and I have been back twice, and my god-daughter is there with one of my friends. Especially after the cyclone and all of that, I still care about them heaps and I sent some money and all that stuff and maybe I’ll go back next year also. Some of them have also got scholarships, like my friend’s husband, so we have always been in touch and I went to see him when I was in Sydney. Because of the new found friendships, because it’s a small community and they have new friends who were previous volunteers, word spreads really quickly and there are now other places that want volunteers now... I’m not sure whether there is ongoing assistance or anything. It’s more just friendly relationships now. A couple of people have sent me through stuff when they are applying for scholarships and that, and I have checked through and offered some advice.” KI 020 – Vanuatu

Building friendships can make the volunteering experience a much more rewarding process for all parties, both in their social lives and through the skills that they gain. Becoming accepted into the community at the interpersonal level has the ability to foster further understanding of each other, which can lead to stronger reciprocal skills exchanges, knowledge transfers, and sustainable bonds. Again, the level to which this is achieved is indicative of the way the volunteer can adjust to the cultural values in their specific community, understanding the roles that power, gender, and age play in specific communities. This is in clear contrast to those assignments that are dictatorial, distant, and work-orientated, discouraging local participation. Personal growth and well-being are encouraged through strong bonds and an attitude to fostering relations (Butcher, 2003). Younger volunteers, with their strong social skills, ability to pick up local languages and

adjust to the pace of life in host communities, and their desire to be involved in an array of community activities, are well-suited to fostering friendships within local communities. Torche and Valenzuela (2011) note that continuous bonds built on trust and familiarity provide the basis for resources that emerge from bonded capital. Volunteers and hosts can perceive their experience as authentic and rewarding through close interaction, validated through mutually-achieved outcomes (Conran, 2011). Sending volunteers who possess the want to understand and immerse themselves in local settings can provide avenues for increased local agency, positively influencing the experiences had by both volunteers and hosts within individual assignments.

### **9.3 Challenges to building local-level relationships**

So far, this chapter has identified the positive aspects of relationship building in volunteer-host communities, recognising the power of individual, local-level ties and the opportunities they can provide on volunteer assignments. Yet, it has been stated that not all volunteers, nor UniVols, have similar successes when they try to connect with communities. Volunteer-related barriers to building local relationships have been acknowledged earlier in this chapter, identifying how introverted, self-orientated, or disinterested volunteers can experience significant challenges during their assignments. Barriers to building relationships can also extend from the social environments of host communities. These barriers are often beyond the control of the volunteer, be they current or historical barriers, which can affect the ability to foster relationships with individuals. Those younger individuals who may lack the confidence, awareness, or assertiveness to try and work around such issues can be limited in what they can achieve on assignment, when their interpersonal connections are limited.

Among the eight UniVol participants who discussed difficulties in connecting with their local communities, two main issues emerged. The first related to cultural adaptation, and how certain cultures have norms that govern the types of relationships that are deemed to be culturally appropriate or not. Chapter Six revealed the cultural barriers associated with age in parts of the Pacific Islands and in Southern Africa, which have impacted on UniVols. UniVols discussed issues in working with elder colleagues and the social stigmas that place elders in a hierarchical system, where socialising with younger people may not be appropriate. Secondly, gender issues have also created barriers across all of the continents where UniVols have volunteered, most notably in the Pacific region. Here, cultural and societal norms have challenged the relationships that can be formed between different sexes.

UniVol participants discuss in the quotations below how social pressures related to gender in particular have challenged their relationships with counterparts, colleagues, and with other community individuals with whom they had become acquainted;

“With my counterpart, I would say I did have a bit of a social connection. Not one that would take us outside of the working environment because he is an older male with a wife and I was a young female. It wouldn’t have been culturally appropriate to hang out by the beach or anything like that. But we did have general chats about life, what he wanted to do and what I wanted to do. We would talk about the news, that sort of stuff. I think he was quite an open guy and appreciated the opportunity to talk to us. He was open to the idea to do his job with two girls around him, I mean that would be a tough position for anyone to be in and he always had a really good attitude and was always willing to engage.” KI 011 – ARB

“I mean like my counterpart is relatively young, so I think that helps immediately... So already there is that, and she worked with a UniVol last year, which gave me a boost. She is a fantastic counterpart in the fact that she gets on well with people and she is so game to learn, but I mean the counter to that is that in Bougainville culture, men and women don’t socialise huge amounts. The UniVol last year was fantastic for that [as she was female], so the relationships between me and the counterpart and her and the counterpart will be very different. So outside of work I feel that from a cultural standpoint, we can’t socialise huge amounts. I mean we have all the other factors going for us, like we are similar in age and get along very well, but it’s just not something that happens outside of work, you don’t socialise with the other sex if you can help it.” KI 046 – ARB

Cultural norms have the potential to significantly limit the social spaces where volunteers can build social relations, dictating who they can socialise with and how strong such bonds can be. This can not only influence the ability of the volunteer to build community links, but can impact on the type of capacity building that can be exchanged. Chapter Three identifies that this can be a major issue with social capital more broadly as a development strategy, as it very much relies upon the political processes that govern nations and communities. Opportunities may still not exist for those groups that have strong social capital, owing to a lack of available resources and assets they have access to. Certain individuals may also be excluded and marginalised from networks at the local-level, owing to their societal status, cultural norms, and factors relating to race, gender, class and age (Harriss and De Renzio, 1997; Harriss, 2001). The quotations above show how certain activities and conversation topics can be perceived to be inappropriate across different genders and ages. This requires the volunteer to be considerate of the cultures they are working in, as the possibility of being excluded can exist if they act against such practices.

Barriers like this can be overwhelming for young volunteers if they cannot adjust to social practices, limiting their social connections and their respect among colleagues and hosts, ultimately restraining the impact their assignments can create.

The second common challenge to building relationships, as discussed by participants, relates to the oversaturation of volunteers and development workers in some host communities. Hosts can become apathetic or disillusioned about the constant arrival of development ‘experts’, who try to engage communities in a wide range of elaborate or monotonous projects that seemingly deliver little outcome (see Potter *et al*, 2008). Within volunteering, apathy can parallel such issues. When volunteers try to engage locals in projects that do not lead to tangible outcomes, they fail to create long-term sustainability, potentially costing the host valuable time and resources. Indifference toward the volunteer process, on account of the historical experiences of host individuals and organisations, can reduce the chances of hosts building strong relationships with volunteers who deliver assignments after other volunteers. One UniVol, who worked in a large organisation that recruited volunteers from a variety of global sending agencies, raises the challenges associated with this in the quotation below;

“They sort of view us as... it’s hard to say, but we are a sort of mysterious creature, the volunteer. You come in and you are there for a year and then you leave under the UniVol programme. The work that volunteers do is very beneficial, but I think we are quite a mysterious creature to quite a lot of the local population who we work with. I mean, you do forge friendships with local people and you are on their level and become legitimately good friends with people. It’s quite hard to say what they think of you long term, but you do see it a lot in a developing community though, with people flying in and flying out and their being so much turnover, and it seems that some organisations... have so much turnover, that the people aren’t jaded, but there is an understanding that they are in and they will be gone quite quickly, so locals might not work hard to forge a friendship with someone just because they know a year down the track the person will have left and will probably never come back. So there is that and that’s probably an interesting dynamic and a challenge for volunteers trying to assimilate into a role where there is high turnover in an organisation.” KI 014 – Vanuatu

The challenge that comes with high volunteer turnover and previous assignment failures is the way that host individuals react to volunteers. Participants found that certain colleagues and individuals who they met on assignment were close-guarded and wary of volunteers. Hosts were also cautious of volunteers extending their networks and capacity building with others, when issues surrounding job competitiveness, sustainable employment,

and high unemployment rates in general existed in host nations. Establishing close interpersonal relationships with hosts, when they have experienced dejection and failure through previous volunteer encounters, is considerably more difficult. They can be less inclined to invest their efforts toward volunteer projects, or enable access for others to become involved. The quotation below reveals the challenges of fostering relationships and social capital in such circumstances;

“Yeah I think the social capital is what I would consider the most important one in terms of actually changing people. You can change physical things and stuff, but if people aren’t trained or aren’t thinking the right way to action them, I think it’s important... Probably one of the biggest issues with it is that it takes a long time to develop those relationships. Once the relationships are developed, then you can do the skills transfer and change how someone thinks or acts in certain situations, it’s very difficult, but it’s very worthwhile in terms of creating a lasting change... I think a lot of it is seeing a different way of doing things. They [the partner organisation] were just sort of going about their business, rather than thinking about it in terms of any sort of capacity building and how they develop others. A lot of people would protect their own patch instead of raise up the others, so that was important for someone coming in from the outside and sharing knowledge, bringing people along with them to do different activities. I think that was important, just to develop that idea that everyone is in this together and we should share our ways of doing things and talk about what’s the best way, or what’s a better way than what we are doing currently. Whether or not those sorts of ideas stick around after you leave, who knows. I always found that if they taught each other how to do something, then that person would just take their job, which was hard.” KI 031 – South Africa

The above challenges emphasise the importance of local-level connections and forming a collective understanding of one another. A lack of understanding and trust among one another can significantly reduce the outcomes that volunteers and hosts can achieve, when they are not able to work closely and reciprocally. This applies to volunteers of all ages. Learning, and respecting the lives and cultural practices of hosts, can allow volunteers to gain access to the host community and form stronger bonds with hosts. This can result in the formation of social capital, which can directly aid overarching assignment aims centred on capacity building and skills exchanges, as well as specific assignment objectives. This is why the value of interpersonal relations needs to be further considered within volunteer programmes.

## **9.4 Conclusion**

One of the key aims of this research attempts to understand how the establishment of local-level relationships between younger volunteers and hosts can influence the volunteering

experience for both parties. RQ #4 queries whether there is value in such relations, and whether strong relationships have the potential to positively impact on the overall volunteering experience for all stakeholders involved in youth IDV. This chapter has considered the perspectives of both volunteer and host respondents, to illustrate how the formation of strong relationships at the individual level has ultimately strengthened particular UniVol assignments. It has argued that the social capital that is produced within such local-level relationships ultimately increases the likelihood of positive impacts and outcomes.

Such findings support research that is concerned with host community impact. Trau (2015) argues that IDV is capable of providing local capacity development only if the exchanges are carried out ‘hand-in-hand’ over extended periods. In relation to the UniVol programme, the social capital that is fostered through strong interpersonal relationships with hosts has arguably led to increased skills exchanges, capacity building, and positive psychological experiences. Bridging forms of social capital are most evident, where volunteers can tap into existing bonded forms of social capital within local communities to mobilise capacity development, and connect organisations and individuals with other community or global networks. To form such relationships, mutuality and reciprocity, strong ties and high levels of trust are essential. This chapter has shown how close bonds and trusting connections between UniVols and hosts have enabled relationships to become stronger, which in turn has enabled hosts to ‘buy-in’ to volunteer assignments, producing capacity building, sustainable skills exchanges, lasting friendships and host empowerment.

To form strong relationships, there can be a number of social and cultural challenges that volunteers can face. This chapter has shown how issues related to cultural norms, and the apathy of community members who have experienced constant or negative connotations related to volunteering and development, can make locals apprehensive of volunteers. For those UniVols who have succeeded in establishing strong relationships with hosts, their attributes surrounding their social skills, their willingness to work together, and their cultural sensitivity, have been invaluable. These skills have enabled them to negotiate potential challenges and build strong rapport with partner organisations and other community individuals and groups.

This discussion argues that younger volunteers can produce meaningful outcomes for hosts and deliver valuable assignments when relationship building is valued, even if they perhaps do not possess the same skills as other younger volunteers, or their older



volunteering counterparts. Strong relationships, friendships, together with trusting and mutual exchanges, are effective ways to engage hosts and effectively exchange a wide range of skills, ideas and knowledge. Getting to know individuals can create opportunities to learn and exchange ideas that are outside of assignment descriptions. These relationships, and the skills that can be delivered from them, can be of significant value to both parties, both mentally and physically. This chapter has addressed RQ #4, contributing towards a significant knowledge gap surrounding the potential of relationships and how they relate to the impact of younger IDV volunteers in host communities.

# Chapter Ten

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## Concluding remarks

## 10.1 Introduction

A detailed examination of the UniVol programme, through the perspectives of various stakeholders, has enabled this research to explore the overall potential that younger IDV volunteers can have when they are engaged in volunteering assignments. This research has aimed to explore a number of identified research gaps, to contribute knowledge to the field of youth volunteering and to IDV in particular. The characteristics, systems, and attitudes that can create either success or failure within the UniVol programme, have been examined in detail to understand more intimately what factors are important to consider when sending younger volunteers into the field. Motivational factors have also been considered, yet from a perspective that differs from traditional motivation-centred research on youth volunteers. This research has considered motivation changes through volunteer experiences, and whether such experiences and motivations to participate subsequently influence the future life and career decisions of UniVol participants. The growing concern about the lack of host input in IDV research has also been addressed. This research has analysed the opinions of various local participants in order to understand how they perceive and value their experiences with UniVols. How their opinions match the perceptions expressed by UniVols themselves and sending organisation staff provides a clearer picture of the successes and failures of the programme. And finally, the value of relationships and social capital within UniVol interactions has been considered in detail, contributing to knowledge on the importance of younger IDV interaction and where youth can successfully contribute. In exploring these areas of research, this thesis has broken new ground, contributing to knowledge and understanding of where younger volunteers in general can be most effective when they are engaged in IDV, delivering outcomes for not only themselves, but for the host communities where they volunteer.

This chapter will identify the key findings within the aforementioned areas. By doing so, the key research contributions will be reinforced, indicating how the analysis of the UniVol programme and the subsequent results of this research can possibly translate to other youth IDV programmes and to wider volunteer knowledge. This chapter will specifically highlight the value of interpersonal relationships within the UniVol programme, presenting a new model that illustrates the factors and attributes required to form relations, and then utilise them to ascertain meaningful outcomes for both volunteers and hosts. Finally, this chapter will then reflect on this research project, discussing certain facets that limited the research, and identifying possible future research opportunities that could extend from the

research in this thesis. By doing this, this chapter will effectively synthesise the overall research, identifying its value within wider volunteering literature.

## **10.2 Key contributions and findings**

Within the results chapters of this thesis, there is evidence that suggests that youth IDV volunteering can be effective when it is managed and organised in ways that ensure that both the volunteer and their hosts are well prepared and supported. This positive framing of youth volunteering, and UniVol examples in particular, is not an attempt to ignore the critiques directed at youth IDV and wider volunteering programmes. Rather, it shows that younger IDV volunteers can foster positive experiences and create beneficial outcomes for both themselves and their hosts when they are volunteering in conducive environments. The youth volunteering sector continues to grow in popularity, sending young volunteers on assignments within a variety of different contexts. Critique towards youth volunteering has rightly exposed how neo-colonial and neoliberal agendas have shaped volunteering discourse today (Simpson, 2005; Georgeou, 2012; Tiessen and Heron, 2012, Vrasti, 2013). There are programmes that are inherently commercial in their aims, unwittingly promoting significant power imbalances between their volunteers and the host communities they operate in. Legitimate concerns surround the activities of such programmes, as these experiences can easily replicate previous forms of colonial exploitation and marginalisation when they are poorly managed.

Within IDV in particular, the key form of youth volunteering related to this research, there are valid concerns that question whether programme delivery is orientated towards developing volunteer skills-sets and capacity through host community exchanges, focusing on issues of global citizenship and volunteer concerns over the requirements of hosts. Those who have critiqued the macro neoliberal frameworks underpinning IDV programmes have identified problematic issues related to the heavy focus on quantifiable economic outcomes, and the subsequent disregard for relationships, power relations, and other embodied experiences that can also foster meaningful outcomes (Georgeou, 2012; Griffiths, 2014a; 2014b; Turner, 2015; Aked, 2015; Baillie Smith *et al*, 2016). Neoliberal quantification is ultimately driven by the competitive and justifiable nature of funding and volunteer recruitment today. Whether the focus of such programmes are directed internally toward the organisation, to validate the existence of the organisation and the concerns of the West, or towards the development needs of the host partners with whom those organisations work, is of concern. IDV's core focus should essentially lie with the host community, using

volunteering as a means to generate reciprocal exchanges that encourage empowerment, development and progress among those partner organisations and individuals who interact with the volunteer.

There is also validity to the arguments that stress how neoliberal individualism has become entrenched within global society today, evident in the volunteering context through the self-minded motivations of volunteers. This is especially the case among youth. Chapter Seven examined the UniVol context and discovered that the majority of participants expressed self-minded motivational factors in their reasons to become IDV volunteers, resonating with neoliberal ideals that focus on building the entrepreneurial, self-minded individual in the free-market world. It seems that more individuals view IDV programmes as a progressive career step, or consider other individual benefits before the important development aims of such programmes. This self-centred thinking is also prevalent through the construction, marketing and recruitment of certain programmes, where individual gain and reward is presented as a major centrepiece to IDV participation; actively campaigned for by Western institutions. Valid neo-colonial concerns are raised in these instances about the way that host communities are positioned as a means to develop volunteers. Using developing communities to upskill young western volunteers places increased pressure upon hosts, minimising the possibility of community development and upliftment. The overall IDV agenda is contradicted in this sense, marginalising hosts further. Working within such global frameworks provides little opportunity to mitigate neoliberal individualism, when sending organisations are dependent on high volunteer quotas and justifiable outputs to secure funding and ultimately maintain their presence in the sector. One of the key aims of this research was to explore the impact of younger IDV volunteers, and to demonstrate where youth can be effective within this volunteering context. The key findings of this research are presented in the following sections.

#### **10.2.1 Are younger volunteers effective?**

This research has shown that although younger volunteers, and UniVols in particular, may not hold the experience and life-skills that older volunteers possess, there exist a number of spaces that are well-suited for youth involvement. Chapters Six and Eight, which address RQ #1 and #3, have outlined how effective UniVol volunteers have been at exchanging basic skills with host organisations, and with other host individuals. UniVols were particularly adept at transferring basic computer and written skills to host organisations that lacked such capacity, helping upskill individuals and fostering skills that are essential for organisations in

the modern age. For UniVols, and for younger volunteers in general, competency with computer technology and developing written skills are enhanced through their schooling and university experiences. The familiarity with technology, in particular, is often second nature to younger volunteers, who have grown up within technology-dependent societies. Chapter Eight revealed the importance that host communities place on gaining these skills, in order to allow organisations and individuals to upskill and become more globally connected. Hosts in developing settings are not often granted the same educational opportunities that volunteers receive, and have limited exposure to computer-related technologies. How organisations develop, and how individuals upskill, is in a way dependent on the ability to access resources, networks, and other opportunities. These are generally dependent on technological platforms in modern society. Assignments that aim to develop competency with those organisations that are not as established, or have limited capacity, are suited to the incorporation of youth volunteers. Younger volunteers then have the opportunity to contribute to host communities with their other skills-sets, extending beyond these core skills to connect to other areas of society. This was a key finding from RQ #1.

The success of youth in delivering such capacity is also dependent on other factors that are attributed to both themselves and to the host community. Chapter Eight has discussed in detail the youthful demographics that make up a number of UniVol host communities. Younger volunteers working within younger populations can increase the opportunity to reach a wider audience, as younger people are more likely to extend their relationships with individuals who are of a similar age. Older volunteers have raised issues around their inability to connect with host communities outside of working environments, due to a lack of commonality and substantial differences in age. UniVols have shown throughout this research that their ability to adjust to local cultures, to adapt to local languages, and their heightened social activity, have allowed them to interact with more community members and to reciprocally exchange ideas and skills. These are characteristics that are central to the successful assignment experiences of UniVols. Working with host individuals who are broadly similar in age can minimise a number of potential barriers, as individuals are at a similar stage of life and can relate more closely to one another. This research has also shown how younger volunteers can sometimes struggle to volunteer in societies and organisations where cultural barriers can limit the exchanges made between different ages and different genders. Roles that work with younger employees, or reach out to younger community members, are particularly suited to youth volunteers. Their ability to

foster relations and connect with hosts can hold high value, an aspect that is enhanced when their sociability is allowed to flourish.

### **10.2.2 Development education and sending organisation support**

Chapter Seven showed that within youth IDV, there are measures that can limit inherently individual motivations, emphasising the importance that host community interests hold. In terms of recruitment, the UniVol programme exemplifies the value of considering prospective volunteers who hold development-orientated interests, and the overall need for rigorous volunteer screening. UniVol participants are required to have studied development-related courses at university, which ensures that they are more likely to be aware of basic development principles and how IDV is represented within them. UniVols were shown to be generally sensitive and considerate towards local customs and cultures, being able to adapt to local environments more quickly and effectively than their older peers, some of whom can be inhibited by language barriers and cultural differences. These were major factors that allowed a number of UniVol assignments to foster success for both hosts and volunteers, and were key traits that emerged from the discussion that addressed RQ #1. In terms of motivations, Chapter Seven revealed that a number of UniVols were motivated to, or became interested in, carrying their future careers forward in other development-related fields. A significant number of UniVols chose to further their studies in geographical or educational fields, or to find employment with NGO's or government organisations that operate in development, environmental and conservation-based areas (see Table 7.1). This was a key finding related to RQ #2. Although having volunteers form their career paths through their experiences can reflect the negative issues related to global citizenship and neoliberalism, as discussed earlier in this chapter, this research has shown that there were also clear altruistic motivations related to the future decisions of those UniVols who followed such paths. An understanding and interest in development-related issues created an environment where UniVols were often aware, and genuinely committed to the delivery of IDV principles, as well as the importance of the overall programme. While clear benefits are evident for the individual volunteers who commit to IDV programmes, there also existed a genuine interest in delivering assignments that supported their hosts.

One aspect that can help reinforce the development focus of such programmes relates to organisational preparation and support, and the quality of pre-departure briefings. As discussed above, the development-orientated backgrounds of UniVols may differ from other potential youth candidates, who may be unaware of the development-related implications

connected to volunteering. Equally, if volunteers are self-focused, then the steps taken by sending organisations to provide effective support networks, to prepare appropriate assignments, to form clear communication with host communities, and to educate potential volunteers, are essential in enabling benefit for the host community. In relation to motivation, Chapter Seven has shown that an effective pre-departure programme that emphasises the core objectives and requirements of volunteers is an effective process to ensure that younger participants are aware of what the programme aims to achieve, and whether their personal intentions fit. When partner organisations are given the opportunity to create assignments in conjunction with the sending organisation, there is a space created where an emphasis on development through mutual exchanges is clear. Skills can, therefore, be exchanged reciprocally, and the potential to foster added-value is enhanced for both parties in the volunteering dynamic. Altruism and development delivery can subsequently be elevated within the experience over any overarching individual motivations. The actions of the sending organisation in providing effective management and communication was a core issue that related to all four research questions.

### **10.2.3 Strong relationships as a precursor to success**

Perhaps the clearest contribution that this research has produced, tying the above findings together, is centred on the importance of relationship building. The results and subsequent discussion in Chapter Nine have revealed the propensity for success, among both volunteers and hosts, when strong relationships are founded. This research was able to build on literature that proclaimed the importance of effective relationships and partnerships in the volunteering experience, incorporating elements of social capital to address RQ #4 and understand the value of relationships in the youth IDV context (see Aked, 2015; Schech *et al*, 2015). The experiences among UniVols and hosts exemplify how strong bonds and more intimate interpersonal relationships can increase the opportunity for effective skills-exchanges and capacity development, as they foster principles of social capital (trust, understanding, and reciprocal exchanges), to promote mutuality and empowerment in the relationship dynamic. Relationships and social capital have the potential to mitigate negative aspects that are linked to volunteer delivery, ideas that stress how volunteer programmes can accentuate marginalisation, neo-colonialism, and are implicitly tied to the sole concerns of the volunteer. Connecting with host individuals and developing understanding and trust between one another, illustrates a level of empathy and commitment towards host communities. They can then be more willing to interact, learn, and also contribute to the overall experience, when those relationships are meaningful. This can also balance power



relations, as hosts are more connected to the direct and indirect outcomes that may be produced within the volunteering experience. Bridging forms of social capital can then be witnessed, where the volunteer can utilise those skills mentioned above to work towards assignment objectives with hosts, facilitating capacity and utilising bonded forms of social capital among hosts to connect with other networks and develop potential opportunities.

Relationships and social capital are by no means exclusive to youth volunteers. This research has argued that the neoliberal processes that dictate volunteering today ultimately fail to respect the value that relationships hold. It calls for further consideration of relationship potential within volunteer frameworks, regardless of whether the outcomes of relationships can be clearly quantified for financial justification. This research shows that youth volunteers can create real development impact in host communities, and are more likely to do so when they form strong relationships with their hosts. It is clear that relationships ultimately increase the likelihood of skills exchanges taking place within volunteering experiences. The experience for hosts and volunteers is therefore more rewarding when they can connect with each other.

The quality of social capital and relationships can vary in different settings, however, due to the cultural practices and norms of certain communities and groups. Power relations within these settings and the role they play in enabling or disabling individuals to gain access to social capital networks, have been significant criticisms made towards social capital as a broader answer to development (see Harriss and De Renzio, 1997; Harriss, 2001; Fine, 2007; 2008). Yet volunteers are well positioned to connect with hosts at the interpersonal level, where the value of social capital and the impact of relationships are considered to be at their greatest. Certain skills and characteristics are required on the behalf of the volunteer to understand the cultural and societal intricacies within their assignment locations, and foster such connections. In relation to the youth IDV sector, this research has shown that there exist unique characteristics and attributes within certain youth volunteers that facilitate relationship building at this level. The experiences of UniVol volunteers show how cultural understanding, a willingness to learn, the ability to learn host languages, and high sociability all positively contribute toward youth developing connections with hosts. Those who fail to build such connections may be hampered by the limited support networks from their sending organisation, or by the host organisation that may not be clear of the purpose of the younger volunteer. Chapter Six has shown that certain youth can be constrained by their shy dispositions, or through their favouring of expatriate communities over local individuals.

These are important characteristics to consider when sending organisations recruit and select younger volunteers for overseas assignments. Within this research, it is clear that those experiences that were deemed to be of value to both volunteers and hosts were predicated on the formation of relationships, which encouraged and subsequently facilitated, more open and rewarding exchanges.

As a means of displaying and synthesising the value of relationships within youth IDV programmes, a model has been developed to show how interpersonal connections can enable positive experiences among youth volunteers and hosts. Figure 10.1, presented below, details the various inputs required from different stakeholders to develop strong relationships, and the subsequent outputs that can eventuate for both the volunteer and the host through successful, reciprocal connections. It also identifies certain challenges that can appear on behalf of the volunteer, the host, and the sending organisation, which can influence the quality of the relationships that are formed within these spaces:

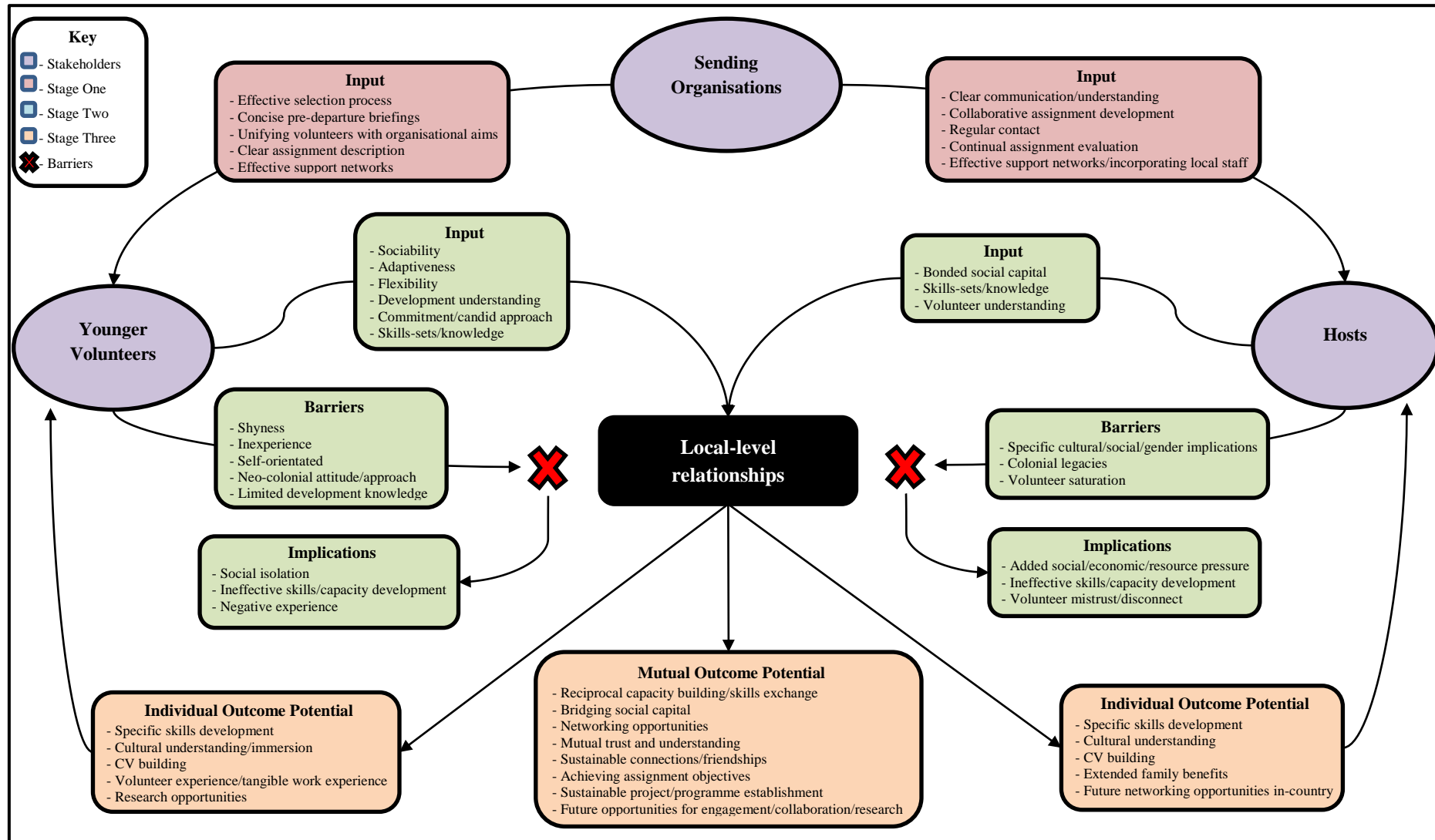


Figure 10.1: Fostering effective local-level relationships between younger volunteers and their hosts (Source: Author's research)

Stage One in Figure 10.1 illustrates that for younger people to have the opportunity to form close relationships on assignment, there are essential pre-requirements on behalf of the sending organisation. There is a need for clear communication, understanding and mutual programme development between the sending organisation and partner organisation, to allow younger volunteers the best opportunity to succeed on assignment (see Turner, 2015; Aked, 2015). Understanding volunteer capabilities can limit the possibility of establishing roles that are beyond their skills-sets, allowing them to be more confident in their roles and to connect effectively with hosts. This, in turn, allows hosts to understand what they can gain from the volunteer, and fully utilise the skills that they possess. Establishing assignments in this manner helps avoid dependency issues that can burden hosts, when younger volunteers are overwhelmed by the roles they are asked to fulfil. Volunteer preparedness and the support that is in place, if required, can help to ensure a clearer transition into the volunteering experience and allow volunteers to immerse themselves more seamlessly into the partner organisation and the wider community.

At the next level, Stage Two in Figure 10.1 identifies the essential inputs of both younger volunteers and their hosts to form effective local-level relationships. These inputs have been detailed throughout this research, showing how they can aid assignment delivery and generate positive social experiences. Being outwardly sociable in nature, with an adaptive and flexible approach, gives younger volunteers an advantage when they attempt to connect with individuals and become involved in projects outside of their direct assignments. For UniVols specifically, this research has shown that their development knowledge aids the likelihood of forming interpersonal relationships, as they are generally sensitive in their approach to community immersion. Barriers that limit relationships between hosts and younger volunteers are also clear. Certain issues have limited the opportunities for UniVols to connect with host communities. Youth who are self-focused and lack experience or cultural knowledge, can find it difficult to connect with hosts and overcome those social and cultural obstacles that make hosts reluctant to connect with volunteers. These challenges are often aligned to legacies of colonialism, an overexposure to volunteers, and to specific cultural practices that the host experiences, ultimately deciding how relatable and engaging they will be with volunteers.

Those relationships that are not as strong can have significant implications for both volunteers and hosts. As evident in certain UniVol cases, younger volunteers can feel isolated during their volunteering assignment, which can result in a negative experience.

Limited engagement can reinforce a number of negative critiques associated with youth volunteering, where the overall capacity for development is limited and no clear benefits for hosts are evident. This challenges the justification for allocating resources toward youth assignments that have negative results and no tangible outputs (Tiessen and Heron, 2012). For hosts, a lack of connection to volunteers can further reinforce the mistrust between external development workers and their communities. Continual volunteer experiences that lack engagement are more likely to create significant cultural and social barriers for those volunteers who follow on from negative experiences, also limiting their ability to foster trusting relationships.

When relationships do, however, produce effective exchanges, there are clearly associated benefits. Stage Three presented in Figure 10.1 exemplifies the outcomes of local-level relationships among younger volunteers and hosts that were presented in Chapter Nine. This chapter addressed RQ #4, illustrating the importance of local-level relationships and interpersonal connections within youth volunteering. Younger volunteers, owing to their predisposed skills, characteristics, and interests, generally have an innate ability to build relationships. Building friendships with hosts can lead to the formation of social capital, more common in its bridging form, which allows volunteers to utilise their predisposed skills effectively to address the needs of their hosts. This can, therefore, foster further opportunities once the host individual and the volunteer are more closely-knitted together. Closer ties allow for the formation of trust and respect between one another, which again is essential in understanding the true needs of those hosts who may be reluctant to place confidence in the volunteer. Trust and confidence can ultimately lead to more effective skills exchange, strengthening an element of reciprocity when both the volunteer and the host can work effectively together and exchange ideas. Through both aspects, the ability to connect with other networks and build sustainable friendships with one another can again create a range of opportunities, both individual and socially, which lead to tangible development for the host.

Overall, the function of local-level relationships can add significant value to the experience of youth volunteering, both for the volunteer themselves and for their hosts. Volunteers are in a unique position where they are frequently working closely alongside their hosts, outside of the rigours of large development and government-led projects (Tyler and Walter, 2006; Turner, 2015). True value can be found in the closeness of ties that are formed between individuals and volunteers. This creates a dynamic where trust and equality is valued, generating an environment that is more conducive to mutual exchanges. For youth,

there is a general consensus that they indeed lack the life experience, work experience and skills-sets to facilitate large-scale development schemes. However, there is considerable value in connecting with individuals and organisations at the lower level, sharing the skills, capacity and knowledge that both parties have in a way that promotes local empowerment and equality. This can create clear development outcomes for hosts. What can be achieved through these relationships and connections, as evidenced in Chapter Nine, indicates the need for closer consideration as to how relationships are valued and measured in today's quantifiable, neoliberal-driven volunteering industry. Turner (2015) suggests that too often, external organisations and donors are focused on end outcomes and not on the process itself. How to reach successful goals is dependent on relationships and the ability to formulate trust, and work toward outputs collectively, aspects that require further consideration within all global volunteer systems.

### **10.3 Reflecting on this research**

While this research has contributed to the field of knowledge surrounding youth IDV, host community perspectives, the impact of relationships and social capital, and wider youth volunteering processes, there are future opportunities to extend upon the collected data. Unfortunately, the nature of research at the PhD level is constrained by a number of factors, adding to the limitations that are associated with field-based research and participant access. This section will now consider some of the major limitations of this research project, identifying future research opportunities that can extend from it.

In this particular research, one of the major issues involved in building the data set was concerned with access. 100 participants were incorporated, who were living in different settings across the world. The research relied on VSA's database and snowball sampling methods, in order to make initial contact with former UniVols. Unfortunately, this database had become somewhat dated, as UniVol participants had become disconnected, moving on in their lives and changing their contact details in the process. For others who were able to be contacted, large geographical distances presented challenges in conducting interviews. Of those UniVols who did participate in the research, 15 volunteers were living abroad. The research benefitted from the use of online technologies, which were often the only means of connecting with certain participants. Those participants who did not have access to such technologies, or were reluctant to use them due to time differences and personal inconveniences, however, were unable to contribute to the qualitative data set. Similar issues

were also associated with former VSA staff. They had either moved on in their lives and were unable to be contacted, or were unavailable for interviews due to various constraints.

In regards to host communities, a lack of access to certain individuals proved to be a barrier. Establishing initial contact with partner organisations was aided by VSA, but proved to be difficult in certain cases where selected participants were frequently unable to access the technology required to communicate from remote places. Contact then relied on snowball sampling, or sometimes visiting organisations unannounced during the field-based research. This ultimately enabled further participants to be included in the research. In certain cases, however, identified participants were away, or were committed to other causes, which hindered their participation. There were also other access barriers that limited the participation of local hosts. As mentioned in the results chapters, certain partner organisations had experienced high staff turnover, owing to the low paid positions that employees were fulfilling. As time has progressed, a number of former staff members who had directly, or indirectly, worked with UniVol volunteers, had either moved on to other positions or had become disconnected from their former colleagues. Again, due to the lack of access to communications technology, these former employees were unable to be contacted. This may have been avoided with a longer field-based research period, but unfortunately the field-based research was conducted within a tight time-frame. A lack of time in the field, coupled with various other factors that limited participant access, ultimately restricted the number of host community members who were able to participate, thus influencing the scale of the data-set.

VSA staff, UniVols, and host communities are working, or have worked, in numerous settings in Southern Africa, South East Asia, and the Pacific Islands. To visit all field sites and talk to current and former hosts was unfeasible, owing to the high cost of travel to such parts of the world. As mentioned in Chapter Five, the fieldwork sites were chosen because of the volume of current and former UniVols who were working in those specific locations, aiming to give access to a larger number of participants. Because of the high cost of travel and accommodation arrangements, there were no further funding sources to visit other countries, regardless of their proximity to those nations that were visited. Travelling around the Pacific Islands in particular is extremely expensive, due to the limited travel routes and geographical distances between islands. Often such travelling requires return trips to major ports in Australia or New Zealand, in order to visit neighbouring nations. Being unable to include host participants from a distance, because of the lack of

access to technology, ultimately meant that potential participants were inevitably excluded. Distance and costs also proved to be a barrier in contacting those returned UniVols who were based in New Zealand. Potential participants were now living in cities and towns across the entire country, which made visiting everyone in person impossible, due to the cost of travel. Those who were unable, or unwilling to use online technologies in order to be incorporated into the research were unfortunately excluded from the research.

## **10.4 Future research opportunities**

Through the production of this research, and in considering some of the limitations to data collection, there are clear opportunities for further research projects that could extend beyond the presented information. One of the main opportunities that would be valuable to knowledge surrounding youth IDV impact, would be to conduct more detailed research around the value of local relationships from the host perspective. Exploring host perceptions of relationships and their perceived benefits, both during and after volunteer contact, could usefully build on the results from this research. This research has identified the potential that local-level relationships and fostered social capital can have within the volunteer dynamic, and has, therefore, laid the foundations for further research in more detail and scope.

The importance of trust, understanding, and mutual cooperation has shown how capacity building can be enhanced, reciprocal skills exchanges can increase, and how both parties are more likely to experience positive mental and physical outcomes when they are connected to each other. Due to the specific attributes discussed above and throughout this research, youth can hold unique characteristics and attributes that can make fostering such relations easier, depending on their personal qualities. The opportunity to explore this issue in more detail from the host perspective, would add another dimension to such understanding. Talking to host participants who come into contact with youth volunteers during their assignments, exploring how they value relationships, and what they perceive them to be, would enable the findings presented in this thesis to hold further value. This could be extended through to wider youth IDV knowledge if other global youth programmes were considered in such light.

This further research opportunity links closely with another identified research opportunity that could extend from this research; comparing and contrasting the findings linked to UniVol experiences with other IDV youth programmes. This research has focused on VSA's UniVol programme in detail, to understand how younger volunteers can be



effective in their IDV delivery. As we have seen, the youth volunteering industry is expanding rapidly, with numerous programmes and organisations sending volunteers on various assignments that are often loosely related with development agendas. There would be significant value in carrying forward those ideas presented in this thesis, to see whether they are comparable with other youth IDV programmes. What enables other programmes to experience success or failure, and how organisational and individual factors contribute to this, would generate wider knowledge relating to youth impact. Increased discussion with host communities from different settings would add value to knowledge related to host perceptions, understanding how younger IDV programmes can ensure exchanges that provide benefits for both volunteers and hosts. Overall, there is further scope to consider other IDV youth programmes and how the results pertaining to this research compare or contrast. This would enable broader conclusions to be drawn across the IDV youth sector.

## **10.5 Final comments**

Working within global neoliberal volunteer frameworks, certain programmes and youth volunteering sub-branches are inherently more commercial and volunteer-orientated than others, capturing the attention of academic scholars who are often critical of their impact. Although critique that challenges the underlying neoliberal and neo-colonial issues within volunteering seems appropriate, the differentiation between volunteer sub-branches is complex. Certain critiques do not apply to specific volunteer sub-branches. Critical academic discussion often lacks detailed analysis to identify possible solutions to producing beneficial youth volunteer programmes within such global frameworks, instead presenting a rather negative view of the entire industry. It is within this context that this thesis has explored, building on knowledge and published literature regarding youth volunteering to critically examine the role that youth can play in IDV. By focusing on VSA's UniVol programme as a case study, this research has analysed certain positive and negative elements of youth IDV, exploring the perspectives of volunteers, sending-organisations, and host communities. In doing so, this thesis has broken new ground, exploring a number of issues relating to younger volunteers and their impacts in host communities.

This thesis has addressed the four main research questions that were identified through the literature review process. RQ #1 sought to understand the key positive and negative elements to UniVol assignments, as perceived by VSA staff and the UniVols themselves. Chapter Six illustrated that volunteers had been successful in transferring basic skills-sets among their hosts that were centred on computer skills and written skills.

Volunteers' social skills, development understanding, flexibility, willingness to learn, and sociability were all invaluable assets that enabled these positive exchanges to take place. Alternatively, where volunteer assignments indicated a lack of communication and understanding, combined with the shy disposition of certain volunteers and age and gender-related issues, negative experiences were evident among volunteers. RQ #2 sought to examine the role that motivation played in the assignment outcomes and future life choices of volunteers. Chapter Seven demonstrated that a number of UniVols were motivated by the benefits that the programme provided for them, yet displayed altruistic attitudes towards their host communities. These altruistic motivations were largely attributed to the development understanding that they had gained through their university studies. In regards to their future career choices, a majority of UniVol participants were influenced by their experiences to pursue careers related to their assignment roles, or to broader career and study opportunities in the development field. These findings emphasised the important role of the sending organisation in managing and preparing younger volunteers, ensuring that they are not completely self-focused and that they are aware of the significance of their roles for host communities.

RQ #3 aimed to explore the views of host communities in detail, understanding how hosts perceive their experiences of hosting younger volunteers. The majority of host respondents expressed positive opinions, noting that UniVols had been valuable in staff training and upskilling and improving the organisational capacity of partner organisations. Hosts also noted that UniVols were adaptive, willing to learn, engaging and open, creating a working space that was conducive to reciprocal and mutual engagement. Alternatively, hosts raised issues concerning the length of certain assignments and specific issues relating to communication. Those UniVols who were particularly inexperienced and overtly self-minded also created issues for hosts, which negatively affected their experience engaging and working with younger individuals. Finally, RQ #4 sought to question the importance of local-level relationships between younger volunteers and hosts. Chapter Nine identified that when strong relationships were formed between UniVols and their hosts, further opportunities were created for both parties. The fostered social capital that was evident within such relationships ultimately enabled successful capacity exchanges and more fulfilling experiences. Volunteers became accepted within host communities when relationships were strong, and hosts were increasingly empowered and engaged within volunteer projects. This was in clear contrast to those assignments that lacked strong

community connections, where volunteers became disillusioned and isolated, while hosts experienced little benefit from the volunteering experience.

Overall, this thesis has suggested that successful development interventions can be achieved from younger volunteer interactions under specific conditions. This is most common when younger people have the space to utilise their social skills to engage with hosts and establish relationships, which are in turn likely to increase host engagement and participation. This chapter has presented a new model (Figure 10.1) that synthesises the value of local-level relationships within youth IDV. Connections and fostered social capital increase the likelihood of reciprocal and mutual capacity exchanges that the volunteer interaction is premised upon, ensuring that hosts are also benefitting from the volunteering process. It is abundantly clear that youth volunteers have much to gain from joining volunteer programmes, acquiring the life experience and skills that are considered to be important qualities within western workforces. Ensuring that hosts also receive benefits from the volunteer experience is fundamental to IDV ideology. This is, however, often overlooked within many youth-related volunteer programmes today. Creating the opportunity to build relationships is an important step towards understanding the needs of hosts, an aspect of youth volunteering that requires appropriate input from sending organisations. This thesis has shown that in order to enable youth to deliver assignments that benefit host communities, careful and detailed recruitment, pre-departure preparation, and in-country support networks are vital. Working closely with host organisations to establish appropriate assignments, and ensuring host communities are aware of what the younger volunteer can offer, are essential steps in creating effective spaces for younger volunteers to attempt to foster relations. An environment is then created, which is conducive for younger volunteers to deliver the lower-level capacity exchanges that this research has shown they can be particularly effective at. This is where IDV in particular can utilise the skills of youth to ensure that their volunteering assignments are tailored to deliver development-focused aims, placing high importance on host needs.

From a wider perspective, this thesis has used the UniVol case study to demonstrate how younger people can make valuable development contributions through their IDV experiences. The UniVol programme itself is often discussed in positive terms amongst those who are familiar with it, but it has never been examined in academic research. This research has provided a detailed analysis of the UniVol programme, revealing the key positive and negative aspects to its delivery, management and its output. As a result,

exploring the UniVol programme has enabled this research to consider some of the unique aspects of youth volunteering programmes, to provide a more detailed understanding of the impact that youth volunteers have within the IDV industry. This research emphasises the need for further consideration into younger youth volunteer programmes, and the importance of differentiating IDV in relation to other youth volunteer sub-branches. Overall, youth IDV operates within systems that are inherently volunteer-focused, driven by commercial and neoliberal factors that can ultimately limit the scope that sending organisations can work within. It is suggested in this thesis, however, that there are measures that can be put in place to enable youth to have the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to their host communities, extending beyond the clear self-benefits that volunteering provides. The new model (Figure 10.1) presented above could hopefully be translated across other youth programmes to explore how local-level relationships could be enhanced to support the overall volunteering experience.

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# Appendices

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## **Appendices**

## **Appendix 1 – Information sheet**

### ***The Overseas Volunteering Experience: An Evaluation of Volunteer Service Abroad's (VSA/NZ) UNIVOL Programme***

#### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS.**

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

#### **What is the Aim of the Project?**

This project is being undertaken as part of a PhD research project. The project aims to evaluate VSA's UNIVOL programme, situating it within the context of development, and assessing the relevance of youth volunteering within wider development volunteering knowledge. Motivations for volunteering, the future careers of returned UNIVOL volunteers, and the impact of such volunteering on partner organisations, and on VSA, are of key interest to the project.

#### **What Type of Participants are being sought?**

Participants have been sought through direct contact with VSA, and have then been contacted via email initially to establish contact and interest. Participants have been selected because they are: returned or current volunteers who have worked with VSA, current or previous VSA staff who have been involved with the UNIVOL programme, or current or former partner organisations who have worked with VSA volunteers. The number of participants will vary in terms of the amount of new volunteer recruitments in the coming years, and the ability to access certain participants.

No compensation or reimbursement will be given for taking part in the project. If you would like access to the collected data following participation, then such data will be available upon your request. Overall results will also be available upon conclusion of the PhD project.

#### **What will Participants be Asked to Do?**

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked several questions about your role with VSA and your experiences and associations with VSA's UNIVOL programme. The amount of time involved may vary, but discussions may last up to one hour. Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind. If you experience any discomfort during your participation, then you are most welcome to stop proceedings without any disadvantage to yourself also.

#### **What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?**

Information about VSA's UNIVOL programme and the experiences associated with it will be collected. Personal information in terms of participant's age and assignment details will be collected in order to quantitatively assess the returned volunteer demographic. Their identity, however, will remain anonymous. If participants agree, the interview will be audio-taped to assist the researcher in interpreting the information provided.

This project involves either semi-structured interviews, or focus group interviews, according to the number of participants during the interview process. The general line of questioning includes information about the experiences and opinions of VSA's UNIVOL programme. Topics may also include motivations for volunteering, perceptions of the impact of volunteers from partner organisations, and future suggestions for the programme. The precise questions that will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops.

Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable, you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s), and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind. You will also have the opportunity to withdraw or correct any information as you wish during the interview process.

Information is being collected to assist with understanding the role of the UNIVOL programme within international development volunteering. Individuals will remain anonymous at all times during the processing and writing up of information gathered, and it will not be possible to identify participants in any reports or articles about the findings. The data will only be available to the researchers. Participants will remain anonymous.

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand), but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project, any personal information will be destroyed immediately, except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

Reasonable precautions will be taken to protect and destroy data gathered by email. However, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed. Caution is advised in the electronic transmission of sensitive material.

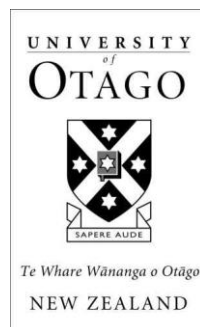
### **Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?**

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

### **What if Participants have any Questions?**

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

*Sam McLachlan*  
Department of Geography  
University Telephone Number:-  
+64 3 479 8772  
mclsa308@student.otago.ac.nz

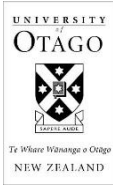


*Professor Tony Binns*  
Department of Geography  
University Telephone Number:-  
+64 3 479 5356  
jab@geography.otago.ac.nz

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256 or email [gary.witte@otago.ac.nz](mailto:gary.witte@otago.ac.nz)). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

## **Appendix 2 – Consent form**

### ***The Overseas Volunteering Experience: An Evaluation of Volunteer Service Abroad's (VSA/NZ) UNIVOL Programme***



#### **CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS**

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary.
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage.
3. Personal identifying information [audio recordings] will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years.
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique in either personal or focus group interviews. The general line of questioning includes the experiences and opinions of VSA's UNIVOL programme. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. There will be no compensation or reimbursement for your participation.
6. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand).
7. I, as the participant:
  - a) agree to being named in the research,
  - b) would rather remain anonymous

☐  
☐

I agree to take part in this project.

.....  
(Signature of participant)

.....  
(Date)

.....  
(Printed Name)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256 or email [gary.witte@otago.ac.nz](mailto:gary.witte@otago.ac.nz)). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

## **Appendix 3 – Interview and focus group questions**

### **Proposed Interview topics – VSA Staff**

Role with VSA

Role with the UNIVOL project

- History - How has it evolved over time?
- The rationale for developing the UNIVOL project
- Specific staff roles with the programme

Opinions on UNIVOL

- In what capacity is it beneficial to VSA?
- How does it differ to other VSA volunteer placements?
- What is the impact in the field like?
- Do field staff work differently with UniVols?
- Differences for headquarters staff working on it?
- Have any major modifications been made so far?
- Is it seen as a positive programme? In what ways?
- What is its role development-wise (in terms of development impact at the community level)?
- Any specific experiences you can recall on?
- Any problems associated with it?

Towards the future

- What are the future plans for UNIVOL programme?
- Any future changes they would like to see/ are happening now?
- Your future involvement with the programme?

### **Proposed Interview topics – Partner Organisation**

Understanding the organisation

- What they do?
- Who do they work with?
- What communities do they target/work with?

Relationship with VSA

- How did they become involved with VSA?
- How many volunteers have they had? Over what time period?

- What do volunteers do for the partner organisation?
- How do they contact/maintain links with VSA?
- How VSA compare to other organisations?

#### UNIVOL programme

- How many UNIVOLS have they had?
- What roles do they play?
- How useful do they consider UNIVOL volunteers?
- How they interact with UNIVOLS
- Are UNIVOLS effective in delivering development volunteering?
- How they interact/immerse within the community
- Any further problems/positives?

#### Comparisons to other volunteers

- Are UNIVOLS more/less effective than normal volunteers
- Are UNIVOLS better at some things than other volunteers
- What particular skills and personal attributes do they want UNIVOLS to bring?
- What is different about them?
- Are UNIVOLS dealt with differently?
- Further thoughts on UNIVOLS?

#### Towards the future

- Do UNIVOLS play a part in future development work within your specific organisation?
- Any critiques/positives that stand out
- Future role with VSA

#### **Proposed Interview topics – UNIVOL volunteers**

##### What assignment were they on

- What roles did UNIVOLS have?
- Involvement within the community
- Various activities that they undertook whilst in the field
- Overall experience?

##### Motivational factors for volunteering

- Why they wanted to volunteer?
- Where they wanted to volunteer?
- Other reasons influencing decision to become a UNIVOL
- What did they do to become ready for the experience?

### Overall impression of their assignment

- What do they believe they achieved?
- What particular contribution did they bring to their placement?
- Did their involvement contribute to individual and community development?
- What extra would they have liked to achieved?
- Was age a factor at all on assignment?
- Any inhibitors?
- Any evidence of neoliberal factors, professionalisation etc, in country?

### Links to development

- Do they think they were effective as youth volunteers?
- Do they believe they had a positive impact on the community?
- Any positive/negative experiences associated with their work

### Ideas around social capital?

- Were you able to develop any specific relationships with members?
- What kind of capacity building was initiated through this?
- Specific examples of relationships
- Are these relationships still sustainable?
- What have people learnt from this?
- What have you learnt from this?

### Thoughts on VSA

- Overall opinion of the programme
- Was VSA supportive whilst in the field
- Did current structures help/hinder their assignments
- How might the programme improve?

### Towards the future

- What careers do they have now?
- Did UNIVOL contribute to their future lifestyles or careers?
- How they reflect on the UNIVOL programme in later years?
- Would they work with VSA in future (Branch involvement/ Headquarters involvement?)
- Are they still involved in development in any way?
- Has the experienced shifted their opinions of development?
- Overall perception of volunteering after experiencing it?

## **Appendix 4 – Health and safety plans**

### **Department of Geography University of Otago**

#### **Samoa - Health & Safety Plan – 11<sup>th</sup> September – 24<sup>th</sup> September**

1. Fieldwork will be undertaken mainly in Apia, Samoa, with VSA field staff, partner organisations, and current VSA volunteers who are in the field. Contact details for VSA's country programme officer are to be found on the cover sheet.
2. Whilst in the field, I will be based out of VSA's in-country office, as they have kindly offered me space to work there while I am in country. The address and contact details are available on the cover sheet provided.
3. Field work will involve travelling to partner organisations, most of which are based in Apia, where I will also be based. At this stage, I do not have contact details for the partner organisations, but can pass this on once contact is made in the field. Contact details for volunteers are also unknown, but can be passed on once contact is made also.
4. Working in Samoa poses a number of challenges that are different to work done within New Zealand.
  - For one, issues around weather are important to bear in mind, as the risk to Tsunami and Cyclone events are significantly higher in Polynesia. In order to prepare for this, I will use common sense, following weather warnings and tips from local weather centres and follow local protocol for such events. The weather is also significantly warmer, so sun protection and hydration will also be important to consider.
  - A risk of coming into contact with diseases particular to Samoa could also be a possibility. In order to prepare for this, the appropriate advice will be sought from a travel doctor and the required inoculations will be taken. I already have inoculations for rabies, which would be considered most problematic due to the number of rabid dogs in Samoa. There also may be issues related to mosquitoes, which will be discussed with the travel doctor. I will also take a basic first aid kit for minor issues.
  - Going to a place where I will be considered as a tourist (potentially a wealthy one also) also comes with common safety issues such as pickpocketing, robbery etc. In order to combat this, I will use common sense and stick to safe areas in Apia and throughout Samoa, be careful after dusk, and gain the appropriate travel insurance through the University to ensure I am covered.
  - The use of public transport could pose an issue in terms of safety, but again common sense tactics will be used to assess the situation. There might be the possibility of hiring a rental car for trips further out of Apia, and if the case, I will familiarise myself with the road laws and drive sensibly.
5. In regards to accommodation, I will be staying with a friend in Samoa. Her house is in a safe suburb in Apia, and has adequate security measures in place. I will be sure



to familiarise myself with the local neighbourhood, as well as the layout of the accommodation in case of a need to evacuate. The address can be found under the Trip Participant list.

6. When travelling to and from Samoa, I will adhere to the safety principles laid out by Air New Zealand.
7. In terms of communication, I will look to keep in contact with Tony via email, as I will have access to the internet at VSA's headquarters in Apia. In the event of an emergency, I will just look to place a call to Tony back in New Zealand, and will take his phone number with me.
8. In the event of not getting there, or not being able to get back, I will either return to Dunedin where I am currently staying, or if stuck in Samoa I will contact Tony and my family and return when possible to fly out again.

Currently, there are a number of unknowns (in terms of travelling to partner organisations and where I will be meeting volunteers) that have not been arranged at this stage. As it comes closer to the time, I will look to update such details and forward them to the Health and Safety team. No itinerary or meetings have been arranged at this stage either, owing to the variable nature of organising things in Samoa. In order to ensure meetings are made and kept to time, such things will be planned a week before hand.

### **Department of Geography**

### **University of Otago**

## **Vanuatu - Health & Safety Plan – 3<sup>rd</sup> October to 17<sup>th</sup> October**

1. Fieldwork will be undertaken in both Port Vila, and Luganville, with VSA field staff, partner organisations, and current VSA volunteers who are in the field. Contact details for VSA's country programme officer are to be found on the cover sheet. An internal flight will be taken from Vila to Luganville with Air Vanuatu in order to switch between islands.
2. Whilst in the field, I will be based out of VSA's in-country office, as they have kindly offered me space to work there while I am in country. The address and contact details are available on the cover sheet provided.
3. Field work will involve travelling to partner organisations, which are based directly in Port Vila and Luganville, where I will also be based. At this stage, I do not have contact details for the partner organisations, but can pass this on once contact is made in the field. Contact details for volunteers are also unknown, but can be passed on once contact is made also.
4. Working in Vanuatu poses a number of challenges that are different to work done within New Zealand.

- For one, issues around weather are important to bear in mind, as the risk to Tsunami and Cyclone events are significantly higher in Melanesia. In order to prepare for this, I will use common sense, following weather warnings and tips from local weather centres and follow local protocol for such events. The weather is also significantly warmer, so sun protection and hydration will also be important to consider.
  - A risk of coming into contact with tropical borne diseases particular to Vanuatu could also be a possibility. In order to prepare for this, I have sought appropriate advice from the travel doctor at student health, and will receive the appropriate inoculations that are needed in relation to the prevalent diseases that could be caught in both Port Vila and Luganville. Traveling to warmer climates in Melanesia also opens up a risk to air borne diseases carried by mosquitoes. I will get a prescription for prophylactics that limit the possibility of inheriting diseases such as malaria, dengue fever and chikungunya. Other precautions will also be taken, such as taking a mosquito net to sleep under, as well as wearing longer clothes and using high-strength mosquito repellent to limit the possibility of getting bitten. I will also take a basic first aid kit for minor issues.
  - There also will be significant cultural barriers that I will encounter on my travels, most specifically issues associated with language. Confusion and misunderstanding might be an issue resulting from this, but I consider myself an experienced traveller and have been to a number of countries in which I was unfamiliar with the language. Being polite and exercising caution will be the best methods to approach this.
  - Going to a place where I will be considered as a tourist (potentially a wealthy one also) also comes with common safety issues such as pickpocketing, robbery etc. In order to combat this, I will use common sense and stick to safe areas indicated by VSAs in country staff, be careful after dusk, and take out appropriate travel insurance through the University to ensure I am covered if any possible issues happen.
  - The use of public transport could pose an issue in terms of safety, but again common sense tactics will be used to assess the situation.
5. In regards to accommodation, I will be staying in at the Anabru Pacific Lodge in Port Vila, and Le Motel Hibiscus Attraction Centre in Luganville. The contact numbers and addresses can be found on the cover sheet provided. I will be sure to familiarise myself with the local neighbourhood, as well as the layout of the accommodation in case of a need to evacuate. The address can be found under the Trip Participant list.
  6. When travelling to and from Vanuatu, as well as internally, I will adhere to the safety principles laid out by Air New Zealand and Air Vanuatu.
  7. In terms of communication, I will look to keep in contact with Tony via email, as I will have access to the internet at VSA's headquarters in Luganville. In the event of an emergency, I will just look to place a call to Tony back in New Zealand, and will take his phone number with me.
  8. In the event of not getting there, or not being able to get back, I will either return to Dunedin where I am currently staying, or if stuck in Vanuatu I will contact Tony and my family and return when possible to fly out again.

Currently, there are a number of unknowns (in terms of travelling to partner organisations and where I will be meeting volunteers) that have not been arranged at this stage. As it comes closer to the time, I will look to update such details and forward them to the Health and Safety team. No itinerary or meetings have been arranged at this stage either, owing to the variable nature of organising things in Vanuatu. In order to ensure meetings are made and kept to time, such things will be planned a week before hand.

## **Department of Geography**

### **University of Otago**

## **PNG/Bougainville - Health & Safety Plan – 24<sup>th</sup> October to 11<sup>th</sup> November**

1. Fieldwork will be undertaken in both Kokapo (East New Britain), and Buka, Bougainville with VSA field staff, partner organisations, and current VSA volunteers who are in the field. Contact details for VSA's country programme officers are to be found on the cover sheet. An internal flight will be taken from Rabaul to Buka with Air Niugini in order to switch between islands.
2. Whilst in the field, I will be based out of VSA's in-country offices, as they have kindly offered me space to work there while I am in country. The addresses and contact details are available on the cover sheet provided.
3. Field work will involve travelling to partner organisations, which are based directly in Kokapo and Buka, where I will also be based. At this stage, I do not have contact details for the partner organisations, but can pass this on once contact is made in the field. Contact details for volunteers are also unknown, but can be passed on once contact is made also. Most of the travel will be done on foot, or by taxi, depending on the distances.
4. Working in Papua New Guinea poses a number of challenges that are different to work done within New Zealand.
  - Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville have a tumultuous history in regards to civil war. Areas around Kokapo and Rabaul, in East New Britain, were particularly effected by civil unrest in recent periods, so it pays to be vigilant and sensible in regards to the political situation there. Bougainville at this stage is in the process of attempting to become an independent state, and has experienced civil unrest in relation to its split with PNG. Again, sensible behaviours in regards to political discussions and the political situation there need to be displayed. VSA has worked in these regions for a number of years now, however, and will be able to provide further advice on appropriate behaviours, attitudes and dress standards etc. whilst in these regions.
  - Issues around weather are important to bear in mind, as the risk to Tsunami and Cyclone events are significantly higher in Melanesia. In order to prepare for this, I will use common sense, following weather warnings and tips from local weather

centres and follow local protocol for such events. The weather is also significantly warmer, so sun protection and hydration will also be important to consider.

- A risk of coming into contact with tropical borne diseases particular to PNG could also be a possibility. In order to prepare for this, I have sought appropriate advice from the travel doctor at student health, and will receive the appropriate inoculations that are needed in relation to the prevalent diseases that could be caught in both Kokapo and Buka. Traveling to warmer climates in Melanesia also opens up a risk to air borne diseases carried by mosquitoes. I will get a prescription for prophylactics that limit the possibility of inheriting diseases such as malaria, dengue fever and chikungunya. Other precautions will also be taken, such as taking a mosquito net to sleep under, as well as wearing longer clothes and using high-strength mosquito repellent to limit the possibility of getting bitten. I will also take a basic first aid kit for minor issues.
  - There also will be significant cultural barriers that I will encounter on my travels, most specifically issues associated with language. Confusion and misunderstanding might be an issue resulting from this, but I consider myself an experienced traveller and have been to a number of countries in which I was unfamiliar with the language. Being polite and exercising caution will be the best methods to approach this.
  - Going to a place where I will be considered as a tourist (potentially a wealthy one also) also comes with common safety issues such as pickpocketing, robbery etc. In order to combat this, I will use common sense and stick to safe areas indicated by VSAs in country staff, be careful after dusk, and take out appropriate travel insurance through the University to ensure I am covered if any possible issues happen.
  - The use of public transport could pose an issue in terms of safety, but again common sense tactics will be used to assess the situation.
5. In regards to accommodation, I will be staying with a VSA volunteer in Kokapo, and in a VSA house in Buka. The addresses for these places are currently unknown at this stage, but can be passed on when such information is available. VSA uphold high safety measures to ensure that its volunteers are safe in the field, so the accommodation will be as safe as can be in these locations. The programme managers can be contacted for further information in case of an emergency. I will be sure to familiarise myself with the local neighbourhood, as well as the layout of the accommodation in case of a need to evacuate. The address can be found under the Trip Participant list.
6. When travelling to and from PNG, as well as internally, I will adhere to the safety principles laid out by Air New Zealand, Virgin Australia and Air Niugini.
7. In terms of communication, I will look to keep in contact with Tony via email, as I will have access to the internet at VSA's headquarters in both regions. In the event of an emergency, I will just look to place a call to Tony back in New Zealand, and will take his phone number with me.

8. In the event of not getting there, or not being able to get back, I will either return to Dunedin where I am currently staying, or if stuck in PNG I will contact Tony and my family and return when possible to fly out again.

Currently, there are a number of unknowns (in terms of travelling to partner organisations and where I will be meeting volunteers) that have not been arranged at this stage. As it comes closer to the time, I will look to update such details and forward them to the Health and Safety team. No itinerary or meetings have been arranged at this stage either, owing to the variable nature of organising things in PNG. In order to ensure meetings are made and kept to time, such things will be planned a week before hand.

## **Appendix 5 – Ethics approval**



14/153

Academic Services  
Manager, Academic Committees, Mr Gary Witte

Professor J A Binns  
Department of Geography  
Division of Humanities

25 August 2014

Dear Professor Binns,

I am writing to let you know that, at its recent meeting, the Ethics Committee considered your proposal entitled "**The Overseas Volunteering Experience: An Evaluation of Volunteer Service Abroad's (VSA/NZ) UNIVOL Programme**".

As a result of that consideration, the current status of your proposal is:- **Conditional Approval**

For your future reference, the Ethics Committee's reference code for this project is:- **14/153**.

The comments and views expressed by the Ethics Committee concerning your proposal are as follows:-

Please address the following comments before proceeding with the research:

The Committee considered that it was inappropriate that University of Otago's research data be stored at and available to the VSA (item 15(d) and 15(e)). The Committee would be grateful if you could consider and comment on any conflict of interest arising for the student researcher, as the VSA would have a vested interest in the results of the study. Participants need assurance that their confidential data is kept securely. Research data should only be available to the student researcher and the supervisor, and should only be stored at the University of Otago. However providing the VSA with a written report at the completion of the project is acceptable and appropriate. The Committee would be grateful if you could seek further advice on this issue and make arrangements for safe and secure data storage during the field research.

The Committee would be grateful if you could confirm whether you are only conducting interviews, or whether there will also be focus groups (page 5, under Methods and Procedures). In the Information Sheet you only discuss the interviews, therefore if focus groups will be conducted this needs to be addressed in the Information Sheet.

The Committee would be grateful if you could ensure participants are aware they can only access their own personal data, not the data of any other participants.


The Committee seeks your assurance that you have read, considered and discussed the Pacific Research Protocols regarding this research with the student. These can be found at the following website: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/research/otago028670.html>

All University of Otago staff and students need to comply with the principles set out in the protocols. The Committee would be grateful for confirmation as to whether you have gained a research permit to conduct research in Vanuatu.

Please note that ethical approval from the Committee does not override the University of Otago's Travel Policy (including the requirement for travel insurance) or Fieldwork Policy. Such policies should be consulted and complied with. The Committee appreciates the response under item 17, but would be grateful for more detail regarding Travel Safety planning for the Fieldwork.

Before approval of the research to proceed can be granted, a response must be received addressing the issues raised above. The Committee expects that these comments will be addressed before recruitment of participants begins. Please note that the Committee is always willing to enter into dialogue with applicants over the points made. There may be information that has not been made available to the Committee, or aspects of the research may not have been fully understood. Please provide the Committee with copies of the updated documents, if changes have been necessary.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Gary Witte  
**Manager, Academic Committees**  
Tel: 479 8256  
Email: [gary.witte@otago.ac.nz](mailto:gary.witte@otago.ac.nz)

c.c. Professor S J Fitzsimons Head Department of Geography

## Appendix 6 – Ngāi Tahu research consultation

### NGĀI TAHU RESEARCH CONSULTATION COMMITTEE *TE KOMITI RAKAHAU KI KĀI TAHU*

Wednesday, 23 July 2014.

Professor James Binns,  
Department of Geography,  
DUNEDIN.

Tēnā Koe Professor James Binns,

**The Overseas Volunteering Experience: An Evaluation of Volunteer Service Abroad's  
(VSA/NZ) UniVol Programme**

The Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee (the committee) met on Tuesday, 22 July 2014 to discuss your research proposition.

By way of introduction, this response from The Committee is provided as part of the Memorandum of Understanding between Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the University. In the statement of principles of the memorandum it states "Ngāi Tahu acknowledges that the consultation process outline in this policy provides no power of veto by Ngāi Tahu to research undertaken at the University of Otago". As such, this response is not "approval" or "mandate" for the research, rather it is a mandated response from a Ngāi Tahu appointed committee. This process is part of a number of requirements for researchers to undertake and does not cover other issues relating to ethics, including methodology they are separate requirements with other committees, for example the Human Ethics Committee, etc.

Within the context of the Policy for Research Consultation with Māori, the Committee base consultation on that defined by Justice McGechan:

*"Consultation does not mean negotiation or agreement. It means: setting out a proposal not fully decided upon; adequately informing a party about relevant information upon which the proposal is based; listening to what the others have to say with an open mind (in that there is room to be persuaded against the proposal); undertaking that task in a genuine and not cosmetic manner. Reaching a decision that may or may not alter the original proposal."*

The Committee considers the research to be of interest and importance.

As this study involves human participants, the Committee strongly encourage that ethnicity data be collected as part of the research project. That is the questions on self-identified ethnicity and descent, these questions are contained in the latest census.

The Committee suggests dissemination of the research findings to relevant National Māori Education organizations and Toitu te Iwi at Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu regarding this study.

We wish you every success in your research and the committee also requests a copy of the research findings.

The Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee has membership from:

*Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou Incorporated  
Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki  
Te Rūnanga o Moeraki*





# NGĀI TAHU RESEARCH CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

## *TE KOMITI RAKAHAU KI KĀI TAHU*

This letter of suggestion, recommendation and advice is current for an 18 month period from Tuesday, 22 July 2014 to 2 January 2016.

Nāhaku noa, nā



BRUNTON

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*Te Rūnanga o Moeraki*

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**Appendix 7 – A list of research participants**

<b>Informant</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Country</b>
KI 001	VSA UniVol	Male	Vanuatu
KI 002	VSA UniVol	Female	PNG
KI 003	VSA UniVol	Female	Vanuatu
KI 004	VSA UniVol	Female	Vanuatu
KI 005	VSA UniVol	Female	PNG
KI 006	VSA UniVol	Male	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 007	VSA UniVol	Female	Timor Leste
KI 008	VSA UniVol	Female	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 009	VSA UniVol	Male	Tonga
KI 010	VSA UniVol	Female	Tonga
KI 011	VSA UniVol	Female	Vanuatu
KI 012	VSA UniVol	Female	Solomon Islands
KI 013	VSA UniVol	Female	Solomon Islands
KI 014	VSA UniVol	Male	Vanuatu
KI 015	VSA UniVol	Female	Vanuatu
KI 016	VSA UniVol	Female	Vanuatu
KI 017	VSA UniVol	Female	Samoa
KI 018	VSA UniVol	Female	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 019	VSA UniVol	Male	Vanuatu
KI 020	VSA UniVol	Female	Vanuatu
KI 021	VSA UniVol	Female	Vanuatu
KI 022	VSA UniVol	Male	Vanuatu
KI 023	VSA UniVol	Male	Vanuatu
KI 024	VSA UniVol	Female	Vanuatu
KI 025	VSA UniVol	Female	PNG (Bougainville)

KI 026	VSA UniVol	Female	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 027	VSA UniVol	Female	Tonga
KI 028	VSA UniVol	Female	Samoa
KI 029	VSA UniVol	Female	Solomon Islands
KI 030	VSA UniVol	Female	South Africa
KI 031	VSA UniVol	Male	South Africa
KI 032	VSA UniVol	Male	South Africa
KI 033	VSA UniVol	Female	Cambodia
KI 034	VSA UniVol	Female	Cambodia
KI 035	VSA UniVol	Female	Cambodia
KI 036	VSA UniVol	Female	South Africa
KI 037	VSA UniVol	Female	South Africa
KI 038	VSA UniVol	Female	South Africa
KI 039	VSA UniVol	Female	PNG
KI 040	VSA UniVol	Female	PNG
KI 041	VSA UniVol	Female	Solomon Islands
KI 042	VSA UniVol	Male	Solomon Islands
KI 043	VSA UniVol	Female	Tanzania
KI 044	VSA UniVol	Female	Tanzania
KI 045	VSA UniVol	Female	Vanuatu
KI 046	VSA UniVol	Male	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 047	VSA UniVol	Male	PNG
KI 048	VSA UniVol	Female	Solomon Islands
KI 049	VSA UniVol	Female	Samoa
KI 050	VSA UniVol	Female	Samoa
KI 051	VSA UniVol	Female	Vanuatu
KI 052	VSA UniVol	Female	Tonga
KI 053	VSA UniVol	Female	PNG

KI 054	VSA Programme Operations Manager	Male	NZ
KI 055	VSA Programme Operations Manager	Male	NZ
KI 056	VSA Recruitment Manager	Female	NZ
KI 057	VSA Programme Manager	Male	NZ
KI 058	Former VSA Programme Manager	Female	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 059	Partner Organisation CEO	Male	Samoa
KI 060	Partner Organisation CEO	Female	Samoa
KI 061	Partner Organisation Employee	Female	Samoa
KI 062	Partner Organisation Employee	Female	Samoa
KI 063	Partner Organisation Employee	Female	Samoa
KI 064	Partner Organisation Employee	Female	Samoa
KI 065	Partner Organisation Employee	Female	Samoa
KI 066	Partner Organisation CEO	Male	Samoa
KI 067	VSA Assistant Programme Manager	Female	Samoa
KI 068	Partner Organisation Employee	Male	Samoa
KI 069	VSA Volunteer	Female	Samoa
KI 070	Partner Organisation CEO	Male	Vanuatu
KI 071	Partner Organisation Employee	Male	Vanuatu
KI 072	VSA Assistant Programme Manager	Male	Vanuatu
KI 073	Former VSA Volunteer	Female	Vanuatu
KI 074	Partner Organisation CEO	Female	Vanuatu
KI 075	Partner Organisation Employee	Male	Vanuatu
KI 076	VSA Programme Manager	Male	Vanuatu
KI 077	Partner Organisation Employee	Male	Vanuatu
KI 078	VSA Volunteer	Female	Vanuatu
KI 079	VSA Volunteer	Male	Vanuatu
KI 080	Former Partner Organisation Employee	Female	Vanuatu
KI 081	Partner Organisation Employee	Female	PNG

KI 082	Partner Organisation Employee	Male	PNG
KI 083	Partner Organisation Employee	Male	PNG
KI 084	Partner Organisation Employee	Female	PNG
KI 085	Partner Organisation Manager	Male	PNG
KI 086	Partner Organisation Manager	Male	PNG
KI 087	Partner Organisation Employee	Female	PNG
KI 088	Partner Organisation Manager	Male	PNG
KI 089	VSA Programme Manager	Male	PNG
KI 090	Partner Organisation CEO	Male	PNG
KI 091	Partner Organisation Manager	Male	PNG
KI 092	Partner Organisation Employee	Male	PNG
KI 093	Partner Organisation Manager	Male	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 094	Partner Organisation Employee	Male	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 095	VSA Programme Manager	Female	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 096	VSA Assistant Programme Manager	Male	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 097	Partner Organisation Employee	Female	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 098	Partner Organisation CEO	Male	PNG (Bougainville)
KI 099	VSA UniVol	Female	PNG (Bougainville)